Philippians

Jan Beute (https://www.vlichthus.nl/)

This epistle is clearly addressed to believers in a particular place. Some letters do speak about unbelievers or address unbelievers in certain verses, but nevertheless the books as such are intended for believers—namely for those who, since the death and resurrection of Christ, have come to faith and thereby have received a share in the life of Christ and thus also in a New Creation, a New Covenant of which Christ is the Mediator, the High Priest.

We as believers have been delivered from this present evil world. In God's eyes we no longer belong to this old world. We stand in a relationship to God that is based on the fact that we have died to the world, to the law, and to sin, and therefore no longer belong to the world. We belong to the Church, to Christ, and thus to His work, His plan, and His Kingdom—even if that Kingdom is not yet manifested.

This form of the epistles contributes to the thrust of their contents. The preaching of the gospel is directed to the natural man, the ignorant, the wandering, in short, to the sinner—and thus, one may say, to the world at large. Strictly speaking, it is not addressed to the world as a system, but to the natural man who belongs to that world, and thus in effect to all who are in it. That is the preaching of the gospel. Therefore we find preaching not so much in the epistles, but rather in Matthew through Acts—especially, and emphatically, in Acts.

Preaching vs. Explaining the Gospel

Since the first day of Pentecost, it was permitted, as Peter says, to preach the gospel freely. Yet the preaching of the gospel is not the same as the explanation or doctrinal unfolding of the gospel. Scripture makes a great distinction between these two. Preaching is directed to the natural man. Explanation, however, is not given to the natural man, but to those who have already obeyed the gospel; to those who have come to faith. Explanation is for the children of God. Preaching, or proclamation, is primarily for the ignorant.

It is remarkable that when the gospel is set forth in the most systematic way in the Bible, this is not done in Matthew through Acts, but in the Epistle to the Romans, the first letter in the New Testament as arranged. This is no accident. It was placed at the beginning because it is foundational, and rightly so. The explanation of the gospel is not intended for the natural man but for believers—those who first received that gospel. The preaching of the gospel in Acts is little more than the setting forth of the historical facts; it is not yet the doctrinal unfolding. That doctrinal unfolding is found afterwards in the epistles, which are not intended for mankind in general but for believers in particular, that their faith may be built up.

Not that we might come to regeneration, but that we who already are regenerated might come to knowledge, and thereby to fellowship with the

Lord Jesus Christ, and subsequently partake of the work God performs in us through His Word.

Christ Rejected, Ascended, and Hidden; Our Present Dispensation

If we consider this more deeply, we see how the Lord Jesus, the promised Messiah, came into a world that did not wish to know Him; how He came unto His own—Israel in particular—and His own received Him not. The next stage in the history is that heaven must receive Him “until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.” (Acts 3)

The Lord Jesus Christ has disappeared from the world; He has withdrawn and hides Himself from the world. Since mankind and the nations in general did not desire this Son of Man, God has given the world over for a time to its own devices, as it were. God effectively said: if you will not have Me, then I will not have you. Officially, everything now waits upon the repentance of Israel. Only then will the story continue.

We live in “the dispensation of the mystery” (Ephesians 3). The Lord hides Himself from the world. And insofar as there remains any message for the world, it is the same old message preached already two thousand years ago by Peter and Paul in Acts. That message has not changed, nor is anything added to it: that men should come to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, submit to Him, receive forgiveness of sins, and partake of the work of God.

After this comes a message intended not for the world, but only for “as many as received him” (John 1). We are now the children of God, and to these children God performs His work. That work is made known in the epistles, from Romans to

The Epistles from Romans to Revelation

Revelation belongs with them, for in it we are told how things will proceed in the future, how the Lord will one day appear again in the world. It is not without reason called The Revelation of Jesus Christ (Revelation 1:1). Revelation is in Scripture the opposite of concealment. Today He hides Himself, but in the future He will reveal Himself—first to us, then to Israel, and then to the world. Revelation sets this out, largely on the basis of Old Testament prophecies which have not been fulfilled in our present time upon the Church, but will yet be fulfilled definitively upon Israel and the nations.

“Heaven must receive him,” said Peter in Acts 3, “until the times of restitution of all things.” This we must fully understand, and Revelation explains it.

The Pauline epistles can, roughly speaking, be divided into three categories.

First come the epistles to the Romans, the Corinthians and the Galatians, in that order. In these the apostle sets out, in the first place, the gospel as such, with all its practical consequences. Then follow Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians, in which the apostle goes more particularly into what follows on from that. Romans, Corinthians and Galatians explain

to us that we have become children of God, how we have become children of God, and especially direct our gaze to how it was, and how it is no longer.
We were of the world, but that is no longer so. We are become dead to the law and to the world (Romans, Galatians). We are dead as to the flesh (Corinthians). How things now stand, and where we do belong as children of God, is unfolded in Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians. These speak of the present work of God upon us, who are children of God—dead to the world, but alive unto God.
After that come the Thessalonian epistles. Those two letters speak in particular about how it ends with the Church, and thus about the “rapture of the Church”.
Philippians concerns itself with the present position of the believer and the present work of God, or of Christ, upon and in the believer. Not that this is not to be found in other epistles, but in the others it is mentioned now and then, as a small part of the letter; here it is the message. Romans, Corinthians and Galatians deal with the New Covenant, with the gospel as such. These evangelical truths concerning the New Covenant will also be applicable in future dispensations, in the days of the second coming of Christ and in the thousand–year kingdom.
Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Thessalonians deal with the believer in this present dispensation. They deal with that specific work which God is doing, whereby He prepares, feeds and causes believers to grow up for the heavenly future. That cannot be said of believers who will yet live on earth in the more than thousand years after the rapture of the Church and before the Last Day. Of them it is nowhere taught that they have a heavenly future.
The heavenly position of believers is reserved only for believers of our days, from the first coming of Christ up to and including the rapture of the Church. Everything that lived and believed before that will ultimately live on the new earth. There is but one people that is regarded as a heavenly people, and that is the Church of our present time. In connection with this, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians are written in particular.
Paul speaks specifically, from prison in Rome, about truths concerning the Church which are applicable only to our dispensation. Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians are prison epistles, because Paul’s position in prison is at the same time the picture of the position of the Church in our days.
The one who is in prison does not, in fact, form part of the world, of society. Until recently such a person was even reckoned to have lost his citizenship. We tend to think that someone in prison is shut in, but the original idea, and the Biblical idea, is the other way round. Someone in prison is shut out; he has lost his rights and no longer belongs. Hence imprisonment and exile are, in the Bible, completely identical. We distinguish between exile, where you are outside, and imprisonment, where you are inside; in the Bible it is not so.
Imprisonment means that one has lost one’s civic rights, that one no longer forms part of the world and of society. You belong only to the world inside those walls. That is the position of the believer. He does not form

part of the world, he is dead to the world, he has lost his old citizenship, and he belongs to another world, a sub–culture. Another “little world”, for it concerns only a small class, namely the Church. The imprisonment of Paul is a powerful illustration of the whole. The imprisonment of Joseph is that as well.

Paul, during his imprisonment, was not shut up between four walls. He had appealed unto Caesar, and was on that ground a prisoner voluntarily. That meant that he could go and stand where he wished; only, if he went outside, he was chained to a Roman soldier. So he was limited.

It is a fine picture of who we are as believers, as members of the Body of Christ, of the Church in our days. We are the property of Christ. We can, to a certain extent, go and stand where we wish, and that is also our own responsibility. Nevertheless there is always the possibility that from above there will be intervention, and that our freedom will be restricted. That is the consequence of it. We have appealed unto the Most High, and we are His prisoners.

Paul says so too, for everyone knows that he speaks of his imprisonment in Rome when he says: “I therefore, the prisoner of Jesus Christ.” That is because the one is a picture of the other. It is a quick way of saying it, but so it is. From that position he writes this epistle to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi. He does that not alone, but together with Timotheus, who was evidently with him on that occasion. These words are therefore written not only on Paul’s authority, but also on Timothy’s.

You do not notice that further in the letter, but it happens more often that the apostle writes his letter and counts his companions as co–writers of the letter.

Paul and Timotheus write this epistle as servants of Jesus Christ. Literally, “slaves”—or Subordinates, people under someone's authority or command. The apostle Paul regards himself as servants or subordinates of Jesus Christ—not only in the sense that he did a serving work, for then it would have needed to be ministers of Jesus Christ, which is another word, also in Greek. The word servant here speaks of the position one occupies also in the legal sense. He was the property of Him whom he served.

You can serve someone without being his property. I do not suppose that any of us belongs to anyone; and yet we can serve one another. Paul regards himself as the property of Jesus Christ and at the same time appointed in His service. From that position and with that authority he writes the letter.

Servants of Jesus Christ. This Jesus, after all, Peter says, hath God made both Lord and Christ, and He is seated in heaven, and all things are subjected unto Him (Acts 2). In so far as the work of God is to go forward, that will be by means of servants who are not only servants of God, but servants of Jesus Christ.

They are not vicars of Christ; they are not in the position of Christ because of His absence—neither in Rome nor anywhere else in the world. Quite the opposite. That also appears from the addressing, for it says: “all the saints”—to all the saints in Christ Jesus.

Saints is the usual word, and very often the opening description of many letters. It is simply the case that all believers are regarded as saints—but

not because they behave as such. The clearest example of “holy things” are the holy objects of the Old Testament. These were not holy because they behaved differently from other objects—for objects do not behave at all.

Think of the temple, the tabernacle and all that belonged to them. Holy objects were holy because they were set in the service of God. Whether the objects were actually used or not was another question—but they were consecrated.

In the same way as the objects were consecrated to the service of the Lord (the “vessels” in the Authorised Version, in the sense of household vessels), Aaron and his sons—the priests—were consecrated unto the service of the Lord. As nothing changed in the vessels themselves, so nothing changed in the nature of Aaron and his sons. They were simply taken into God’s service. The intention was that, on that basis, they should present themselves for the service.

It was compulsory, but they were also summoned to it. Evidently there were those who did not do so. If you were of the family of Aaron, you were, by birth, a priest. You could not yet exercise the function, but you already were a priest—and thus consecrated to the priestly office. When those boys were twenty years old, they had to report to the high priest, the head of the family, the eldest, the firstborn of the family, of the tribe. Exactly that situation applies to us as believers. The thought is that we who are children of God are thereby sanctified. And then at once we should ask: unto what? Who is holy?

In the Roman Catholic church someone is only declared a saint when he is already dead, posthumously. In other circles there is great difference of opinion. Some believers are regarded as saints, and others evidently as unholy—and that is often openly said.

The moment we explain that all believers are holy, people will at once find in the Bible some example of someone who is not a believer at all, and yet is holy. Thus in 1 Corinthians 7, for example, it is said of unbelievers that they are sanctified on the basis of their marriage to a believer.

In practice, to sanctify means “to make ready for service”. If someone is holy, it means that he is available for service. Where the believer is holy and married to an unbeliever, the Biblical thought is that the unbeliever is thereby also sanctified. Because of the unity that exists, the unbeliever is nevertheless, in some way, reckoned available for the service of God. In a rather strange way, and highly exceptional. So you do indeed have there an example of people who are unbelievers and yet regarded as holy.

This shows that sanctification does not stand by itself; it is always a sanctifying unto something—sanctifying unto the service of God. Holy, in the highest sense, means that a thing or a person is available for God, to serve Him.

On that ground all believers are regarded as saints. The fact that they often do not serve God in practice, and thus by no means live “holy”, does occur. But that does not alter the fact that, in principle, all believers are regarded as holy on the basis of their new birth—their birth of the Holy Ghost. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit—and is holy. Hence this form of address. We are holy. The sequel to that is that we are then called

to walk holy—that we should be holy in all manner of conversation, as Peter puts it.

In Ephesians Paul writes to “the saints and faithful”. Two terms are used there, not because they have a different meaning, but because both are designations of the same class: saints, that is, believers. It cannot well be otherwise, for suppose that the term “saints” here in Philippians 1 were not applicable to all believers—to which believers then was the letter written? Only to those who are holy? Then the messenger has a problem, for to whom is he to deliver the letter? The address would be vague. It concerns all the saints, and thus all believers.

It is at once added on what ground one is holy, namely on the ground of union with Christ. On the ground that one is in Christ and partakes of the resurrection life of Christ Jesus. Where we have been planted together with Him (Romans 6) in the likeness of His death, His burial and His resurrection—in short, where we are in Christ, and where He Himself is sanctified unto the service of God, we too, in Him, are saints.

There lies presumably the greatest difficulty: many are not aware that Scripture teaches concerning Christ that He is sanctified unto the service of God. What Scripture tells us about Him is that God hath raised Him from the dead and appointed Him as the Head of all religion—that is a roundabout way of saying that God hath made Him High Priest of the New Covenant. We can also say that God hath made Him Head of the Church; and since the Church is supposed to serve God, and Christ is its Head, this also means that Christ Himself is supposed to serve God and is sanctified for that purpose.

In any case, the Bible speaks thus of Him when it says that He was taken from among men and ordained for men in things pertaining to God—yet He does this in the service of God. Of Him it is then also said in Hebrews 3 that He is faithful to him that appointed him. It is such an essential truth, because we are “blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3). We need to know the position of Christ, for that is our position.

> Hebrews 2:10–11
> 10 For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.
> 11 For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren,

The thought is that God would bring many sons unto glory, and that for this it was necessary that the First of those sons, the Captain of all those sons, should be sanctified through sufferings. Thus it says, in any case, that the Lord Jesus Himself has been sanctified through suffering. That is an important truth, because we are inclined not to see it. We think that He was holy at His birth—and I do not dispute that—but that is not what is stated here. He may well have been holy at His birth, but that does not alter the fact that afterwards He was also sanctified through sufferings. His holiness at His birth had as its consequence that He would also subsequently be sanctified. It was a progressive process. Only when that suffering had been completed and fulfilled was He then regarded as fully

holy. He had to be sanctified through sufferings, and He was only completely sanctified at His resurrection from the dead, after that suffering had been fulfilled. That is what this passage of Scripture is about.

This same Captain is the Leader of the many who are to be led unto glory, and there you have the Church, of which Christ is the Head. In the other epistles He is so called: Christ the Head and Firstling, Firstborn of the Church. Here in Hebrews different terminology is used, but the thought remains the same. He is the first Leader of those many sons whom God will appoint.

And when, in Ephesians, it is then said that we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, the second of those blessings mentioned is that we too, in Christ, have beforehand been ordained that we should in the future be placed as sons.

All this is still introduction to the epistle, for the apostle only really comes to his subject at the end of chapter 2. In this introduction he speaks of the Captain, who would lead many sons, or children, unto glory. When they have received glory they are ultimately sons, so it makes no real difference whether it says sons or children. This stands at the beginning of the argument, with reference to His death and resurrection.

The death of the Lord Jesus and His resurrection took place expressly outside the walls of Jerusalem—from Jerusalem's standpoint, in exile, or in prison, cast out, that is. It is therefore in no way accidental that the Epistle to the Hebrews ends, in chapter 13, by saying that where He would lead us, where He is our Captain, our High Priest and thus the Head of the service of God, and where He is still outside the camp (He has never returned to Jerusalem), there we also should go forth unto Him, outside the camp.

Seeing that, on the ground of our new birth, we are sanctified and born as priests, we ought to report ourselves to our High Priest with the question: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" You do not need to be twenty years old for that. But it is outside the camp—and that is the difficulty.

You may serve God through the Lord Jesus Christ, or serve the Lord Jesus Christ and thereby serve God, but it is always outside the camp, never inside it. That is the conclusion of the, perhaps somewhat less pleasant, side–effects of the service of God.

Even if we are not aware of it when we go unto Him, it will become evident that, once we have found Him and serve Him, we stand outside the camp. Should that not be the case, then we would have to ask ourselves whether we are in fact serving the Lord. That camp is not literally Jerusalem, but society as such—the world.

Philippians and Hebrews run entirely parallel in this respect. They are epistles with essentially the same content; the only difference lies in the wording. It is expressed differently, and more extensively, in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Philippians opens with the words:

> Philippians 1:6
> Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

God continues to complete that work. What work? That He would bring many sons unto glory. Romans 8 says the same, and even more fully. Verse 1 (Philippians 1) thus speaks of saints, and they are saints because they are in Christ Jesus. They have part in Him, and thereby in the work that He does, and thus are foreordained unto glory, or unto sonship. To them the epistle is written—in this case, to those who are at Philippi.
That church had arisen through the ministry of the apostle Paul himself, as appears from Acts 16. Characteristic of this assembly is that there were few believers out of the Jews. Paul, on his missionary journeys, always brought the gospel first to the Jews. That was simply how his ministry was ordered.
In Philippi that did not succeed, because there was not even a synagogue, which means there were no Jews, or too few. Fewer than ten, at any rate. If, in any given place, there are fewer than ten adult Jewish males, then there cannot be a synagogue. Instead they do meet, but not in a synagogue. They meet by the riverside, preferably by running water. That is exactly what we find in Acts 16 at Philippi. Paul preaches there by the water, because there are so few Jews.
That may also explain why in the Epistle to the Philippians there is no discussion of the law under which one lives. It may well be the reason why the apostle speaks in Philippians so sharply and negatively about his Jewish background. You could say that he does so in order to set an example for the Jews in that church, but I think that here he can afford to make such strong statements because he runs no risk of treading on people’s toes.
You cannot approach Jews directly—not then, and not now either. Here he makes a very direct statement about his Jewish background and says repeatedly that he has counted it but loss and dung. He could not have written that in the same way to other churches, for immediately there would have been a division, if there were not one already.
It plays no further role, except that at Philippi the apostle also ended up in prison. That prison opened at once. In Rome Paul had libera custodia, free imprisonment. That is our position. When Paul was in prison at Philippi, the building did not collapse, but everyone could go out.

Philippians 1:1
Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:
That ought to make a bell ring for us. We do not find that in the opening of the other letters. The rest, yes—but not this. This stands only here. It means that the epistle is directed, with great emphasis, not only to the gathered believers, but also to those who bore responsibility in the church—the bishops and deacons.
The reason is that the letter is one great call to service, to humility. And thus the bishops and deacons are included. Otherwise one might get the idea that it only applies to the rank and file, and that bishops and deacons are those who lord it over the rank and file. You know, the famous church princes, the episcopal palace. A bishop is an overseer—that is just a

corrupted form of the same word—but as soon as someone is called bishop he seems to have a palace. That is absolutely not the intention. They hold the same position as all other believers. They may carry greater responsibility, but the position is the same, namely that of service to the Lord and therefore to His Body, to the Church. That is precisely what the apostle Peter writes in 1 Peter 5. There he addresses himself specifically to what he, on that occasion, calls “elders”, but he also uses the term “overseer”. He likewise says that they are to bear responsibility, to serve the Lord, and not to lord it over God’s heritage.
For this occasion they are expressly included here. In so far as there is such a thing as an office—and there is such a thing, in a church—one is not put into office by a church; one comes into it by the will of God. There are two sorts: one category is called overseers, the other deacons. For overseers there are many other terms as well: elders, leaders, shepherds, teachers, rulers. It is all exactly the same.
“Overseer” is the spiritual office, and has to do with the ministry of the Word in the church. Then there is another; the word “office” is not used for it, but it is directly placed alongside the overseer, and that is the deacon. The word deacon means servant. When you read the word minister or servant in the New Testament, in Greek it is this word diakonos.
There it concerns service in relation to practical matters, household matters, organisational matters. It is a service apart from the Word. As soon as the Word also forms part of the ministry, it is called “overseer”. An overseer is indeed a deacon, but a deacon is not necessarily an overseer. The Biblical thought is that in the service of the Lord one begins, by definition, as a deacon—however small the responsibility may be. According to Biblical standards the verger is a deacon. An overseer is someone who leads in the Word. That is the official terminology. Here, overseers and deacons are expressly mentioned. These are all those who in one way or another bear responsibility in the church. To them also it is said that they are to have the mind of Christ, that they are to take a serving position and not to rule.

Philippians 1:2
Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
Grace and peace are words used to greet one another. The Jews greet one another with shalom—peace. The Greeks wish one another grace. In essence they wish one another every good thing—that is what it comes to. It is the usual way in which the apostles begin their letters. It has, however, a much deeper reason. Both terms, grace and peace, function as designations of the New Covenant. The New Covenant is, after all, the covenant of grace, in contrast to the Old Covenant of the law. Instead of the term “New Covenant”, you can also use the term “grace”, in exactly the same way as the Bible uses the term “law” in place of the Old Covenant.
Moreover, the phrase “the old covenant” does not tell you very much. What is old, and what is new? And so Scripture speaks of law or grace. That then concerns the contrast between the Old and the New Covenant.

In many places this is elaborated at length. In these greetings it is exactly the same.
Grace is a designation of that New Covenant of grace, and the same holds for the term peace. Not only grace, but also peace is characteristic of the New Covenant—so characteristic that we even find the full expression in the Bible: “the covenant of peace”. First in Numbers 25, and, I think, also a couple of times in Ezekiel and Isaiah. There we also find the term “everlasting covenant”.
Grace is characteristic of the New Covenant, in contrast to the law of the old. Peace is just as characteristic of the New Covenant, in contrast to the conflict that, by definition, exists under the Old Covenant. Whoever lives under the law, lives always in conflict with himself. You impose upon yourself a law that you cannot keep.
Furthermore, a person who lives in conflict with himself will, in practice, also live in conflict with everything and everyone. One ought to be delivered from that law, in order to live under the grace of God. Then one has peace, for then one has peace with God. If one has peace with God, one can also have peace with oneself, and from that peace also have peace with others.
And so it is called “the covenant of peace”, and therefore the Jews have, since Old Testament days, greeted one another with this word peace. They do indeed wish one another the New Covenant, even though they have forgotten that.
All believers are placed under that New Covenant, but nevertheless it is wished to us. When it is expressed as a wish, that does not mean that one has not yet received it; it means that one should live out of it.
It is just like being holy. We are saints, but we ought nevertheless to be sanctified in all our conduct. We have received grace from God, but to live in grace in our walk is quite another matter. Therefore it is wished. The intention is that all believers should live out of that grace of God and come to the acceptance of Him who is seated upon the throne of grace, because He is the Head of the New Covenant. The throne of grace is the throne of the New Covenant (Hebrews 4).
“Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father”—for from Him that New Covenant comes—and thereby of course also from the Lord Jesus Christ, for He is the Mediator of that New Covenant. All blessings that God gives, to whomsoever and whensoever, always come through the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence we so often find these expressions combined: God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. Through Him it comes to us, for He is the Mediator.
Now we come to the introduction proper of the epistle.

Philippians 1:3–5
I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,
Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,
For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;
It is a reason for thanksgiving, this fact of these saints in Philippi who have come to faith and thereby have part in the Gospel.

The term gospel does indeed literally mean “good news”, but it also expresses the content of that message. The expression therefore says much more. It concerns the whole character of that message, namely the New Covenant, the fact that it has come. By the Gospel man is delivered from the Old Covenant, from the law.

> Romans 1:1–2
> Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,)

Paul is “separated unto”, that is, consecrated or sanctified unto, the gospel of God, which had been promised before. The New Covenant has come. Christ is the Mediator of it. He has been appointed since His resurrection from the dead, and after He had by Himself purged our sins. (Hebrews 1:3) That is what God had promised: the Gospel.

The term “gospel” is also found in the Old Testament, only not with that word, for it is a Greek word. There it is “good tidings”, but in Hebrew that is also just one word. Besides, we always have Galatians 3:8, where the apostle Paul writes that God “before preached the gospel unto Abraham”. He announced the New Covenant, the Seed in whom all nations should be blessed—and that Seed is Christ.

We may indeed say that the death and resurrection of Christ are the preaching of the Gospel, but that implies the ending of the law, of the Old Covenant, and by His resurrection the coming in of the New Covenant. Deliverance from the old, and establishment of the new.

“Fellowship in the gospel” – in verse 5 of Philippians 1 – means that one has part in that New Covenant. If you understand gospel only as the preaching of the death and resurrection of Christ, and then read “fellowship in the gospel”, the risk is great that you read it merely as “they contribute to the preaching of the gospel”. “Your fellowship in the gospel” is then understood as “your participation in evangelism”. But that is not what it is about. Certainly not in the context of this passage.

What it is about, is that they have received a share in this glad tidings, and thus have received a share in Christ and thereby in the New Covenant. That is a reason for thanksgiving – over the fact that these people have come to faith. That can hardly be otherwise, for it says: “from the first day until now”. From the day that they obtained fellowship in that Gospel, by submitting themselves to it. Through that they obtained part in the righteousness of God.

The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation because therein the righteousness of God is revealed. (Romans 1) In the parenthesis in verse 4 Paul gives a brief comment on the expression “upon every remembrance of you”. He also had a good reason to pray for them. Not because things were going badly with them. That is a poor motivation for prayer.

“If any be afflicted, let him pray.” (James 5:13) Of course that is so. If you have troubles, you should bring them in prayer to the Lord. But if we were to pray for every problem that exists, we would have work for the whole day—and that is not the intention.

Where it speaks of “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17), that has to do with the walk of the believer as such, whereby one should live in

dependence upon the Lord. It does not mean that he is constantly engaged in literal prayer.
When should one pray then? When one has cares, when one is anxious about something. Those cares need not necessarily arise from the fact that something is going badly somewhere. Those cares may also spring from the fact that one is responsible for something. That latter seems here the most obvious thought. One bears responsibility, and one should do so in the power of God.
Then one prays to God, and He answers: “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” That is the answer to Paul’s own prayer in 2 Corinthians 12. In this connection Philippians 4 says:

> Philippians 4:6–7
> Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.
> And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

From the grace of God one receives the power of God, and here it says: one receives the peace of God. The reason why we should pray for some specific matter is that we feel, or know, ourselves to be responsible for it. That is the apostle’s situation.
He is the one – and he expresses that in these verses – who at that time first brought the Gospel to Philippi (so far as we know). There people came to faith, and on occasion he says of that that he had, so to speak, begotten them, at least in a spiritual sense. He therefore considers himself at the very least co-responsible for these believers in Philippi. That church came into being there as the result of his ministry. That naturally gives a sense of responsibility.
Whether Paul was truly responsible for the Philippians, I venture to doubt, but through his ministry they were there, and he felt himself bound up with them. It is self-evident that he is concerned for them, see side-line 2; he knows only too well what can all go wrong. Certainly if he himself is no longer present, cannot take measures, cannot correct, or comfort (2 Corinthians 1). Then there is only one thing left for him to do, and that is to pray for them.
In doing so he can make his cares known to the Lord, with the thought that under his circumstances he can do nothing about it and therefore hands it over to the Lord. Those things that we cannot control, about which we are anxious, we can bring to the Lord, and have peace about them. If it goes wrong, then it goes wrong; it lies outside our reach.
At the same time as he prays for them, he gives thanks to God for these Philippians – for their fellowship in the gospel from the first day that they believed, and perhaps even from the first day that he preached the gospel there in Philippi.
The preaching of the gospel is indeed directed to the ignorant, with the aim that they should come to acceptance of Him who is proclaimed to them in the gospel – Christ, that is – but then it is not finished. The point is not simply that sinners should be saved, that unbelievers should become believers. That is not the goal, but only one part of the whole. It is only a first step towards it. It is the first phase of the means to attain the goal.

God makes a man a child of God because He intends to appoint sons of God. First a man must become a child of God, and then it begins. I quote the title of one of my father's pamphlets: "Saved – what now?" Then it only just begins.

Philippians 1:5

For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;

The apostle says that he is conscious of the fellowship of the Philippians in the gospel from the first day until now. Fellowship in the gospel means that one believes the gospel – but that is really the least that can be said of it.

The term "the gospel" is the designation of the whole glad tidings, its content, and thereby of the New Covenant. The thought is that these Philippians have a share in it.

The message is not merely that the New Covenant has come. It does of course begin with that, but the glad tidings is that we may and can live under that New Covenant, with the result that our life suddenly begins to look quite different.

What it is about is that one should actually form part of it, that one should have fellowship in the gospel.

We should not only believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is seated upon the throne at the right hand of God, but then also draw near to that throne, to submit ourselves to Him who sits upon it, and to live under His authority, under His dominion.

We ought to live in service to Him. We should serve Him. Instead of serving sin or serving the law, we should serve Christ, and thereby God. Instead of being servants of the Old Covenant, we should be servants of the New Covenant.

That has a purpose. The gospel is that a New Creation has dawned in Christ. We should not merely believe that, but we should have fellowship in it. We should have part in that New Creation.

Let it be especially clear that the New Covenant is a covenant made on the basis of that New Creation, just as the Old Covenant was laid upon the old creation as such—upon the flesh, namely.

We should live in the New Creation, live in the consciousness that "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away". Thus we should live.

Where we ask ourselves why we are here in this life, what the purpose is of this old life, just so we should also ask what the purpose is of the life in a New Creation that we have received from Christ.

Whereunto are we born again? What is the intention of that life which we have received here?

And just as one can withdraw oneself from the course of things in the old life, so one can also withdraw oneself from the course of things in that New Life, in that New Creation.

It is over that that Paul expresses his concern in all his epistles – that believers are satisfied with the fact that they are born again, and therefore go to heaven, and leave it at that.

Philippians 1:6
Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:
When did God begin a good work in them? On that first day. In fact, the good work of God in believers begins at the very moment a person comes to faith. There is sometimes discussion about this: when does God begin to work in a person? Is it when he hears the gospel, or only later when he accepts it? Or even already before he ever heard the gospel? That question is closely tied to the doctrine of election. But within the scope of this verse there is no difficulty at all. The good work began on that first day when they received their share in the gospel, when they came to faith and became children of God.
It is actually very simple: the good work in a person only begins at his birth. It cannot begin earlier, obviously. It is the same with us. When we became children of God, God began to do a work in us. The work that God does, He does in His children. Before that, the gospel is preached so that people might become children of God and surrender themselves to the work of God—to the Lord Jesus Christ—so that the work of God might take shape in that person. That work begins at the moment a person is born again. That is the first stage. One comes to faith and receives new life. After that, the work on the child begins.
In our translation we read of “babes in Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:1), who are fed with milk and, for the rest of their lives, with solid food. They are to learn in practice, to gain experience, so as to be made fit for sonship and thus for glory.
Romans 8 tells us what the work of God—the work of the Spirit—in us is, namely, to bring us to our adoption as sons. In the same context we read that we know “that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” That “good” is, in that same passage, our being brought to sonship. Insofar as all things work together for good, this concerns our appointment as sons. The “good” is not what we ourselves define as good, but that we should become sons of God.
This is why Paul is confident that the Lord will complete it, for it remains the work of God—not only our regeneration on the basis of our faith, but everything that follows after. God is doing His work in us. That is one reason why we often understand so little of our own lives. Everything goes differently from how we had thought or how we would have preferred. Yet God is doing His work in each of us, and although He deals with each one differently, it is always in order to accomplish the same thing: our adoption as sons.
Scripture does not say that He will complete it “until the day of their death.” We sometimes think that way, but that is not what it says. It says, “until the day of Jesus Christ.” That is not the day of our death, but the day of the rapture of the Church—though in this connection I prefer to call it our manifestation before the judgment seat of Christ. The point is that, insofar as we are to be appointed as sons, and insofar as we are to receive crowns, glory, and an inheritance, we do not receive those things at the moment we die and open our eyes in heaven. We receive all that together

on one single day: the day of Christ. That is the day of the rapture of the Church.
Just as we are waiting for that day, so are all those who have gone before us—those who have fallen asleep in Christ. Their final glorification has not yet taken place. The glorification of the believer of our present dispensation is nothing other than the appointment of the Church as Son, and that happens only in the days of the return of Christ.
This is why we find hardly anything in the Bible about the moment of a believer's death. What we do find is that believers look forward to the coming of Christ. The expectation of His coming is bound up with the fact that this will bring the reward—the promised glory. That is what we live for; for that purpose God is doing a work in us. Therefore, as believers, we do not all look forward to our physical death, but to the return of Christ, to our manifestation before His judgment seat. That many believers are actually afraid of that has to do with the fact that they do not, in practice, accept that grace and peace, and do not allow the Lord to do His work in them.
Our expectation is

> Titus 2:13–14
> Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;
> Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

"To finish" and the race
"Will perform it" is the same as "will perfect it" or "bring it to completion", and this is connected with the image of "running a race" (1 Corinthians, Hebrews). The goal of that race is not merely the finishing line, but the prize. Everyone reaches the finishing line in one way or another—the running of the race comes to an end. Of the Old Testament believers it is said that they finished their course. They are held up to us as examples (Hebrews 11). But in Hebrews 12 we read that the Lord Jesus is the first who not only ran the race here on earth, but actually attained the goal. He is "the author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2), and that refers to "the race that is set before us" in the previous verse. "Author" means the one who goes first, the one who leads the way; "finisher" means that He has reached the goal. Together those two words have one meaning: He is the first who has attained the goal—that is, that He is seated at the right hand of the Majesty in the highest heavens. The goal was "the recompense of the reward", the "promise of the inheritance", a "better resurrection"; several expressions are used for it. The Lord Jesus Christ is the first who has reached that goal. This is not due to Him alone, as it were, but also to the One who gives the prize—the reward. The Lord Jesus is the first who has received the prize, who has received the reward. We are then called to be His followers, so that we too might receive a prize, a reward. We run the race in order to receive an incorruptible crown.
For this reason God, who has begun the good work in us, will complete it "until the day of Jesus Christ".
"Until the day of Jesus Christ"

The word “until” followed by “day” is often taken merely as a time indication, but here it has more the sense of “with a view to”. The work in us can only be done as long as we are here on earth in the flesh. It is directed towards the day of Jesus Christ: that is the meaning of “until” in this context. “Day” itself is also far more than just a time-word—certainly in the Bible.

“Day” originally denotes the light. The beginning of a day, the dawn, is the appearing of the light, which implies that the things that were in darkness are brought to the light. Hence the word “day” came to mean not only the period of light from sunrise to sunset, but also the sitting of a court, or a legal trial. In the same way our word “council” (raad) can mean the court itself, or the sentence that it pronounces. So it is with the word “day” as well. It often has the meaning “judgment”. “Day” stands for “light”; day is the opposite of night. That is why the day begins at sunrise and ends at sunset. The calendar day is then stretched over the night until the sun rises again and the next day begins.

“The day shall declare it” is a judicial statement. The “day of the Lord” dawning means that light breaks into the darkness.

The same idea lies behind our use of “day” in expressions for a tribunal or high court. Think of the “Reichstag” before which Luther appeared: that was the supreme imperial council, the governing assembly that sat to judge. He was summoned before the Reichstag—he was “called to the day”. In that sense our word “day” still carries that connotation of judgment.

In Scripture, when it speaks of “the day of the Lord”, this is not in the first place a period of twenty-four hours, even though that day of the Lord will, at a certain point in time, indeed begin. The day of the Lord stands for the judgment of Jehovah Himself. It is therefore not Sunday or the first day of the week. The day of the Lord concerns the return of Christ to execute judgment upon the living mankind. Then it will be brought to light by Him (1 Corinthians 3), “for the day shall declare it.”

The expression “day of man” has become popular in English literature, as the title of a book by Philip Mauro. Yet in our entire Bible that term does not actually occur. It is derived from 1 Corinthians 4, where the apostle speaks of a human judgment. In English one reads “day of man”, and that is indeed the meaning: human judgment. In the “day of man”, man sheds his own light on things—but man has no light at all, and nothing comes of it.

By contrast, the “bright and morning star” (Revelation 22:16) belongs to the coming of Christ, and thus to the true day of judgment when God’s light truly shines.

The day of Christ, and other “days”

The One who will judge is the One who will, in that day, bring to light how things have gone with that good work of God in us; what has come of it. If little has come of it, that is not God’s fault; the fault lies with us. Our manifestation before the judgment seat of Christ is the day of Jesus Christ, when He will bring things to light and make them manifest, including the things that were done in secret.

In the Bible, “the day of Jesus Christ” is also called “the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” or “the day of the Lord Jesus”. We also find “the day of Christ”, and at times simply “that day”.

> 2 Thessalonians 1:10
> When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

When He is glorified in His saints, we shall receive glory, a crown, an inheritance. This takes place “in that day”—the day when He shall have come. That day is the day of Christ.

We find the same expression in:

> 2 Timothy 1:12
> For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

Here it does not say explicitly which day it is. Terms such as “the day of the Lord”, “the day of Christ”, “the day of man” are not, in the first place, bare time-labels. They describe events and relationships. Furthermore, the Father has committed all judgment unto the Son. So whether it is called “the day of Christ”, “the day of the Lord”, or “the day of God”, it is always the Lord Jesus Christ—“our great God and Saviour”—to whom the judgment is given. It is one single complex of judgments, which nevertheless unfolds in different phases.

The first is the judgment concerning the Church. The second is the judgment upon the living humanity on earth, in order that His kingdom may be established on earth. Then He bears again, as it were, the Old Testament name Jehovah, and one might then speak of the “day of God” and apply that to the Last Day—the judgment before the great white throne of God over the whole creation and over all who have ever lived. That is the final, last judgment.

The term “day of the Lord” is the Old Testament expression which denotes that Jehovah Himself will bring judgment upon the entire living mankind—not on the Last Day, but long before that, in order to establish His kingdom over the whole earth, beginning with Israel. Hence “the day of the Lord”.

But before that, the “day of Christ” takes place, at the beginning of the seventieth week of Daniel. That includes the judgment with respect to the Church, over you and me, who “must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body” (2 Corinthians 5:10). It is also a judgment for those who remain behind on earth. They are not allowed to go with the Church—that alone can be regarded as a judgment. In any case it means that those who do not belong to the Church and therefore remain on earth will fall under the judgments that come upon the earth.

At that point it becomes difficult to draw a sharp line between the day of Christ and the day of the Lord. We should not take the terminology too absolutely. The terms which name the Lord Jesus Christ explicitly stand, first of all, in relation to the Church; and where the expression “day of the

Lord” is used, this stands in relation to the judgment upon the world as such.
In addition, as far as the day of the Lord is concerned, we ourselves will be involved in that judgment—not in the dock, but as part of the court. We shall take part in that council. We shall judge the world and the angels together with Christ. So when Scripture speaks of the day of the Lord, it certainly does not mean a judgment of God upon us; on the contrary, it concerns the judgment of God upon the world, and in that case we stand on God’s side.

Reward, the crown, and the danger of loss

Paul expects to receive reward from the Lord, laid up for him in heaven. One cannot earn that reward in the sense of meriting it from nothing, but one can lose it. It lies ready beforehand for each believer. The intention is that we should receive our full reward, and that we should not lose our crown.

> 2 John 1:8
> Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.
> Revelation 3:11
> Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

The biblical thought is that for every believer a fixed reward lies ready. Man can add nothing to that. To each believer a race is set, and for running that race he receives his full reward. The race is not the same in outward form for everyone, and therefore the measure of reward also differs in that sense. But we should not compare our reward with that of others. It is proportionate to the race that is set before us, and that race is simple for some and far more difficult for others. Why that difference? Because we also differ according to the flesh, and have different capacities and limitations. In any case, each believer is given a course to run, and with that course a certain reward belongs. If he runs the race as it should be run, he receives that reward. If he does not run it, or only in part, he loses reward. That can indeed happen.
Paul speaks very plainly about this in:

> 2 Timothy 4:7–8
> I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:
> Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

Verse 7 describes the struggle—the race of faith. On the ground of God’s righteousness Paul will receive that crown. Notice that he does not speak about the result of his labour, he does not count how many people came to faith through his preaching—as, sadly, is all too common today. He has run the race, and whatever the result of that may have been, his crown does not depend on numbers.
In Isaiah 49 the Lord Jesus speaks in similar terms through the prophet. He has done His work and expects to receive reward—a crown of righteousness. At the same time He observes that, humanly speaking,

little seems to have come of that work. He has laboured in vain as far as Israel's response goes; He came to gather Israel, but Israel would not be gathered. Yet He has done all that had to be done. He has run His race, even though Israel did not let itself be gathered. Nevertheless He says that His reward is with the Lord, and that God is His strength and His righteousness. His reward is before His face. He has done the work entrusted to Him, and it is not for the servant to judge what it has yielded. The servant who has carried out the task given to him will receive his reward, even if, as far as visible results go, it all seems to have been in vain. When a person has carried out the command given him, he receives his wages. Whether that command produced the effect which the one who gave it had in view is another question.

We read again of "that day" in:

> 2 Timothy 1:18
> The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well.

Here again it is about the same day, the same judgment—the manifestation before the judgment seat of Christ. We shall be summoned, and our works, whether good or bad, will be brought to the light (2 Corinthians 5:10). Strictly speaking, the work that will be judged is not in the first place our work, but the work of God in us—the work of the Spirit, the work of Christ, the "good work". That is what we read here in Philippians: "the good work which he hath begun in you".

Created unto good works (Ephesians 2)

> Ephesians 2:8–10
> For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:
> Not of works, lest any man should boast.
> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

We should notice that the expression "unto good works" in verse 10 is the direct contrast to "of works" in verse 9. We are not saved out of good works, but that does not mean that good works have nothing to do with our salvation. It is only that our salvation is not of works.

We are His workmanship—born again, in Christ and not in Adam—unto good works. To what end, for what purpose, are we His workmanship? Why has God caused us to be born again and given us new life? In order that we might be able to walk in those good works—that is, that we might do them.

And yet, lest anyone think that we are suddenly driven to labour in our own strength, Scripture expresses it in this way. Still, it remains very much God's intention that we should do those works. Here they are called "good works"; elsewhere, especially in James, "works of faith". They are works which we do, not from our old man, but from our new man—that is, from the life of Christ in us. They are works which we do because the love of Christ constrains us. They are works which God does through us—but only in so far as we make ourselves available to Him.

When we receive reward for them, that is quite right. Works are “works” not simply because they are activity, but because one receives wages for them. I derive that from Romans 11, where it is said that if one does not receive wages, the works cease to be works. Thus “works” are defined as rewarded service. That is how the term is used here too.
If, nevertheless, it is said that we live by grace, this is also right. By the grace of God He has made us able to be ministers of the New Covenant. By nature we cannot do this, but He has made us fit for it. For that purpose we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus; for that purpose He has caused us to be born again. The will and readiness to do those works are the result of the Word of God, or the Spirit of God, in us.

God’s goal, not ours
The real issue is not whether we will achieve the goals which we have set ourselves, but whether God will reach the goal which He has set for us. Regeneration is nothing more than the first step along that way; it is the first necessary event. First we must receive life, and afterwards that life must be nourished and trained. That is the work which God does in us. That is the present work of Christ as Head of the Church, as Chief Shepherd. That is the present work of the High Priest after the order of Melchizedek on behalf of His people (Hebrews).
This is far more, and very different, from the work which He accomplished in the past. The question now is what He wants to accomplish in us now—the goal which He has in view for our lives. To this end these epistles are written. The greater part of the New Testament is not addressed to unbelievers so that they might hear the gospel, believe, and be saved. The greater part is addressed to those who have heard the gospel and are saved, so that they might live out of it; so that the good work which the Lord has begun in us might be brought by Him to completion.
This only takes place if we submit ourselves to that work, not if we try to take control of it. It is not that we are to get our new life “under control”; that is what He does. We are to submit ourselves to Him, and He will do His work in us—not thanks to us, but in spite of us. From us, God expects only availability, willingness to serve, and humility.
That is the substance of this epistle.

Philippians 1:7
Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.
The Philippians and Paul have received the same grace from God. That same God will also work out that grace in them all. He will complete His work in both Paul and the Philippians. From the middle of the verse it becomes clear that Paul knows how the Philippians have behaved towards him—especially during his bonds, since he was taken prisoner, and since he has had to give an account of himself in Rome.
“The defence and confirmation of the gospel” means that even during his imprisonment in Rome Paul was in contact with the Philippians: there was correspondence, and messengers were sent to and fro. The Philippians

had not abandoned Paul to his fate, but shared his concerns. They formed a unity with him. Through that ongoing contact the apostle Paul can see that things are going well with them, and that God is continuing the good work in them.
That this is the right understanding is confirmed by verse 8:

Philippians 1:8

For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.
Just as the Philippians evidently longed after Paul, and had informed themselves about his circumstances, so Paul in turn longs after the Philippians. He adds, moreover, “in the bowels of Jesus Christ”. That is, with the inward affection, or inner disposition, of Jesus Christ.
When we as believers open ourselves to the Lord and to His work—and therefore also to His Word—His mind is formed in us. That means that we will begin to love all our brothers and sisters. The Lord loves us, and if His life is in us, that love is also in us. Then we are concerned for one another. Not because we are formally responsible for one another, or because we have so much in common naturally, but because we are members of one body. We ought to serve one another. This arises almost of itself: it is the life of Christ in us.
That is what this epistle is
: humility and servanthood as the expression of the life of Christ in us. In practice that means the disposition, or mind, of Christ in us.
What is called here “the bowels of Jesus Christ” is called, in Philippians 2:5,

> Philippians 2:5
> Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

So it is about the mind, the inward attitude, of Christ. In Galatians 6 the apostle says that we should, where necessary, correct one another—that is, point one another to the right way. We are not responsible for whether the other person actually walks in that way, but we may indeed show it.

> Galatians 6:2
> Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

Here again we find this disposition and servanthood—love put into practice.

> Galatians 6:3
> For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

“In his heart” or “in his mind” means: in his inward attitude, in his feelings.

> Galatians 6:4–5
> But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.
> For every man shall bear his own burden.

The word “own” is expressly added there.

Galatians 6:7
Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

Here it is about “that day”, about the final outcome of all things.

The day of the Lord and the day of God

“The day of the Lord” means that He will cause His light to shine, and thus the day of the Lord stands over against “the day of man”; and “the world to come” stands over against our present world.

“Day” is a term of judgment, and “the day of God” (or “the day of the Lord”) has to do with the return of Christ, by which He brings judgment upon living mankind—upon the whole creation at the Last Day. The differences between these expressions are not so great; it is rather their essential unity that matters.

Galatians 6:9–10
doing good, and why
And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.
As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

These works—these good works—are not an end in themselves. “Goal” is a relative idea. What is the goal of our new birth? That we, as a new creation, should walk through life and “walk in the works” which He has before prepared. That is what we read in Ephesians 2:10.

But when we put those good works into practice, we shall often find that, in themselves, they seem to have little effect. Little that is outward and positive appears to come from them. And yet we should not grow weary. Why not? Because, although the work itself is directed outward, towards others, this is so precisely because we are meant to learn to serve. We are not to do these things primarily so that things may go better with the other person, but so that something may change in us. We are to do them so that there may be a change, not first in our outward circumstances, but in our hearts, in our inner attitude.

I deliberately avoid using the word “thinking” here, because that sounds very concrete—close to reasoning and deliberation. These things we are meant to do without much deliberation, almost automatically. If there is a conscious motive, it is that “the love of Christ constraineth us”, or that He will reward us for it. The immediate result of such service is the change in our inner disposition. That is the work of God in us.

All that labour which we may undertake in the service of the Lord has, in practice, very little obvious effect. Take evangelistic campaigns, for example. A very great deal of money and energy is put into them, but how many people actually come to faith through them? I do not say that such efforts should not exist; I mention them only because we all know they are widely undertaken, and at the same time we can all see that, outwardly speaking, the yield is small.

But that is not what it is about. I am not criticising these activities; I am only saying that the goal is not their outward visible fruit. Our service to

the Lord has not an outward but an inward result as its true aim, namely the transformation of ourselves.
There is one Bible verse that sums this up perfectly—It is 2 Corinthians 3:18 – reflecting the Lord's glory - beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.
The text means that we reflect the glory of the Lord—though sadly it is translated as "beholding as in a glass". We not only receive that glory—that light—and live in that light, but when our faces are unveiled, we reflect the glory of the Lord. We are not looking into a mirror; we are the mirror.
The point of the verse is this: when we have laid aside the veils—our own ideas, our own philosophies—and live in the surpassing glory of this "ministration of the Spirit", then we reflect the glory of the Lord. We hear the Word of God, and we pass it on. That is the simplest form of it. In the verses that follow in 2 Corinthians this is exactly how it continues: receiving and passing on.
If we still wear a veil, it may mean that this glory does not reach us. That is why many understand nothing of the Bible—because they try to force it into their own philosophies or theologies. Then that glory never really reaches them. And even if we have received this light, and say that we are saved by grace and live under the New Covenant, but then add: "Yes, but we still must keep the law…", then another veil is drawn over our faces. Then what we have received may never be passed on.
Passing it on does not only mean bringing the gospel message; it means that the truths of the gospel take shape in our practical lives. That we live out of it. That our actions are determined by it. We receive the Word, we live out of the Word, we become doers of the Word—and the result is that we are inwardly changed in our disposition.
We gain knowledge of the Word of God; we hear it, believe it, understand it—and perhaps that changes our way of thinking, our deliberations. We start to see things differently. But if we not only receive the Word of God and understand it, but also live from it, then, through that process of reflection, we are changed in our inner attitude. It becomes "second nature". We develop reflexes; we do certain things instinctively. We are servants—and it is only truly a disposition of heart when it becomes natural, when it proceeds from the heart as something obvious. The central point is the transformation of the inner man.
We usually say, in connection with Romans 12, that we should be transformed "by the renewing of your mind". It is not merely a different way of reasoning or a different logic; it has to do with our inward attitude and thus with our feelings.
This becomes visible in many who know the Word of God and are supposed to preach it. They are afraid of the consequences. The position that "you must do it exactly as Scripture says" can be very properly defended—and then at the same time one hears that you must "not tell everything you know", because under certain circumstances this would have very bad effects. In that last remark there is truth—if one is thinking about outward results. But that is just the point: God is not aiming

primarily at outward results, but at inward results—what He will work in us.

Philippians 1:9

love abounding in knowledge and discernment

And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment;

How can love increase? Only through knowledge and “judgment” (discernment). Those are the words used here. The subject is love—and therefore fellowship—but one cannot love, or have fellowship with, someone or something one does not know. We have to learn to know the Lord Jesus Christ; and the more we learn of Him, the more we shall love Him.

The word translated “love” here does indeed denote the highest form of love, but it is not something mystical. It is intensely practical: it is serving one another. This is what the Lord does for the Church, and what the Church does in relation to Christ—serving Him, loving Him practically.

We as believers are to abound in this—in knowledge and in “all judgment”. These are two terms.

In verse 9 the apostle links back to what he said in verses 3, 4 and 5, where he expressed his bond with the Philippians, especially in that he remembers them in his prayers and always makes supplication “with joy” for them all. Now he returns to that prayer. His prayer is directed towards the increase of love in, or among, the Philippians. Then he explains that this is love which abounds more and more “in knowledge and in all judgment”. That is the main point.

This confirms what I often say about “love” when it is mentioned in Scripture—especially where the Greek word agapē is used, which in fact comes directly from Hebrew. There is often much said about the term agapē and the concept of love. Some claim that it is a word which cannot be translated into any modern language) because we supposedly lack an equivalent. That is a misunderstanding. It is simply “love”.

The distinctive thing about this biblical concept of love is not that it describes a mood or emotion—something like romantic feeling—but that it refers to very concrete and practical realities. Love in the Bible, and the verb “to love”, have a strongly practical application. It is about practising love and fellowship. It is about service. If you love someone, you will serve that person.

To love God is not done only with the heart, but also:

> Luke 10:27
> …with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind…

The “soul” there is simply the practical, everyday life. We are to love by practical service. That is the point. This is also the background of the concept of “fellowship”, which is in many ways synonymous with love. Practising fellowship is serving one another—in every way.

Therefore, it is not at all strange that love plays such a large role at the beginning of this Epistle to the Philippians. It is a key word in this introduction.

A heavenly calling and a serving life

This epistle speaks of the fact that we, as children of God, are partakers of a heavenly calling:

> Hebrews 3:1
> Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling…

Here, in Philippians, it speaks of “the high calling of God” which is from above:

> Philippians 3:14
> I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

We are awaiting an inheritance in heaven—a reward or crown—which can only be received or attained through practical service. That is the gist of Philippians.

We are children of God, but as children we differ in nothing from a servant. We are to serve God, and in doing so serve one another. Our reigning with Christ lies in the future. And these two—serving now and reigning then—are inversely related. Here we are to serve, and in proportion to how we have learned to serve here, we shall share in the rule of Christ there.

For the Lord Jesus Christ it was exactly the same. Here on earth He performed a work of service; He was the Servant of the Lord. As a result, He has been seated on the highest throne. He humbled Himself exceedingly, and therefore:

> Philippians 2:9
> Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

This is set before each one of us, and before the Church as a whole, as an example. The apostle does not call it “serving”; he calls it “love”—love as practical service. A love that governs the whole of life: not only the inner feelings of the heart, but the entire practical life of every day.

He prays that this love may abound “yet more and more”. From that form of expression we can immediately recognise Paul as the writer: he is a master of what we might call the “double superlative”. “Abounding” is already much; “more abounding” is very much; “more and more abounding” is, one might say, overflowing to the utmost. Just as with “the exceeding riches of his grace”: riches is much already; “exceeding riches” is extraordinarily much—there is nothing beyond that.

The fruit of love causes love to grow. There is a mutual interaction, which is why Scripture so often speaks of “exercise”. When something is practised, one becomes trained in it. The harder one trains, the more one is able to do. Love can increase, but only if it is put into practice. If it is not practised, it withers. What is not used loses its power—like muscles. If love is not worked out in practical service, nothing of love remains. Love is maintained and increased through practical service.

If this does not function in our human relationships, we may as well give up. But in relation to the Lord our situation is different, and the failure will never lie on His side.

Romans 5:8

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Nowadays He proves His love toward us in that He remains faithful and:

Ephesians 5:25

…Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

If our love for the Lord is poor, it is because we do not serve Him in practice. That does not mean we must necessarily go out knocking doors to tell the gospel. We are to serve the Lord in everything we do. In all of life we ought to be aware of our relationship to the Lord, and from that awareness do things as for Him, so that we may also be rewarded by Him in the future.

If that is not how things look to us, if that is not how we walk, then things are not well with our love for the Lord—and therefore also not well with our love for our brothers and sisters. One does not go without the other. How do we know that we love the Lord? Scripture answers:

1 John 3:14

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.

When love increases, this does not mean that the emotional feeling becomes stronger; it means that its practical outworking grows.

2 Corinthians 5 – the judgment seat and the love of Christ

We are speaking about work that is done “because the love of Christ constraineth us”. In the first part of 2 Corinthians 5 the subject is:

2 Corinthians 5:10–11,14

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men…

…

For the love of Christ constraineth us…

This fits exactly with the Epistle to the Philippians. It is about the reward, the “recompence of the reward” or the inheritance we shall receive from the Lord on the basis of practical service—the result of that love which works in us.

Paul is speaking there of the same thing, namely his own ministry, which he presents as an example to the Corinthians. He gives two reasons why we ought to serve the Lord. On the one hand, because we know “the terror of the Lord”—that we shall be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ. There is something to be gained; there is reward to be received. For the Lord Jesus Himself it was the same. He ran His race “for the joy that was set before him”:

Hebrews 12:2

…who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

This thought is repeated in many places in Scripture—for example, in John’s Gospel, where it is shown that He walked His path in view of the glory set before Him. He looked forward to it, and spoke of it often.

We are to do the same—looking to “the recompence of the reward”. And we have the example of all those heroes of faith (Hebrews 11). There, again and again, it is stated why they ran their race: they looked to the recompence of the reward, to the glory of Christ, they expected “a better resurrection”. That is a right motive. Then we stretch forward towards the future. Not our past, but our future should determine how we live today. For us as children of God this is possible, because we know that future—at least in its essential outlines.

In 2 Corinthians 5 the apostle speaks first of “the terror of the Lord”—a more negative motive, used there as an example for the Corinthians. At the end of the section he says, however, that “the love of Christ constraineth us”. That is an inward motivation. A motive sets things in motion; it moves us—our thinking and our actions.

The love of Christ is in us, and it works these things. Some consider serving out of love for the Lord to be a higher or purer motive. Of course it is the love of Christ that constrains us. Nevertheless it is also thoroughly biblical that, alongside this, we should set our hope on the glory which the Lord will give us in the future. The love of Christ sets things in motion, and that motion is ultimately directed towards the glory that is set before us. This is exactly what the Epistle to the Philippians brings out.

The thought is that the whole life of the believer—and with it his service and daily walk—is characterised by love: love in the practical sense of the word, and thus service to the One we love. In the first place this is the Lord Himself; in the second place it is those who, like us, are children of God and share the life of Christ—the brethren, as John puts it.

<u>Love, knowledge, and “all judgment”</u>

Paul mentions several aspects of this love. First, that it may increase, abound more and more “in knowledge and in all judgment”.

“Knowledge” translates the Greek word gnōsis. However, there is a preposition added in front of it, so that the translators have chosen to render it as “acknowledgment” or “full knowledge”. Greek prepositions are not easily checked by means of modern dictionaries; they often have little independent meaning. Very often, especially in the New Testament, a preposition is prefixed simply to intensify the word. That is the case here. The word is gnōsis, “knowledge”, and before it stands epi, making epignōsis—“full knowledge”, deeper knowledge, knowledge of a higher order.

A similar phenomenon appears later in this epistle: we read of “resurrection”, “out-resurrection” (exanastasis), and even “out-resurrection from among the dead”. The repeated “out of” strongly emphasises the thought that it is a resurrection from among others. One “out of” would have been enough; two “out ofs” lay strong stress on the point. It is the same principle here with epignōsis.

So “knowledge” here is knowledge in general, in that richer and deeper sense. Alongside it stands the word rendered “judgment” (or “discernment” in some translations). This word also has the sense of knowledge, and is sometimes translated that way. Because both words are used side by side, we should briefly indicate the difference—but the

emphasis lies more on their agreement than on their difference. Both point to knowledge.
Gnosis is more theoretical knowledge; “judgment” (or “discernment”) is more practical knowledge—knowledge gained from experience. Gnosis is knowledge one may learn from books, from reasoning, from listening, from words. “Word” in Scripture is not only logos as spoken word; it also includes reasoning, forming concepts, formulating things, drawing up principles—philosophising, so to speak. That is gnōsis: knowledge, understanding, especially with that epi in front, indicating a higher degree. But it remains theoretical.
The other word—“judgment”, “discernment”—also denotes knowledge, but in a practical sense: knowledge gained through experience. It is, the ability to do something, to bring something about—and for that one needs experience.
The one kind of knowledge, gnōsis, is more connected with what we call the “spirit”; the other, practical discernment, has more to do with what Scripture calls the “soul”. There are craftsmen who know their trade extremely well and can carry it out perfectly, but have no idea why it works that way; they know by experience that it works, but they do not know the theory behind it.
The love of verse 9 can develop; it can grow. That growth goes hand in hand with growth in knowledge—better rendered, perhaps, as understanding. Deeper theoretical understanding and practical experience belong together. Theory, without practice, is useless and cannot be further developed. Practice without theoretical understanding reduces a person to a kind of machine. The two are meant to go together.
These principles hold in the old creation as well, but here they are mentioned specifically in connection with the life of the new creation, of the children of God: love for the Lord and for the brethren. We cannot deny that such love ought to exist, for Scripture says it so often. But it is only developed when there is development in theoretical understanding—insight into the work of God. That understanding, in practice, is knowledge of the Bible.
That is theoretical knowledge—not merely knowing where each text is (a concordance can tell us that), but understanding the content and connections: epignōsis, deeper knowledge of the unity of Scripture. Knowing that it is not about isolated books or isolated words, but about the whole of Scripture. In that we are to grow in understanding.
We should also live out in practice what we learn from Scripture. We should gain experience in these things. The intention is that we should learn to know Christ. That is said in chapter 3, but of course also in many other books of the Bible. This goes much further than simply learning from the Bible who He was, what His name was, what He did, and in what order. That, in itself, is not of great value. It is indeed necessary that we learn to know Him from the Scriptures—we must know who He is—but we cannot love a person of whom we know absolutely nothing.
It is one thing to learn to know Him from Scripture; it is another thing that, in the practical course of our lives, we should get to know Him in a very simple way: by going through the same kinds of experiences as He did.

That is how one learns to know the Lord. You can get to know Him in that way even with relatively little Bible knowledge. And that is a good thing, because there are people who have little or no Bible knowledge and cannot help it—if only because they have no Bible, or are otherwise limited or disabled. Such a person can still learn to know the Lord simply by going through the same sort of experiences as He did.

For example, by discovering that people are not really interested in the Scriptures, and that mankind in general is more interested in its own traditions than in what the Word of God says. Or, for example, by finding that when we know the truth from Scripture and share it with others, they do not want it—they will hate us. “The world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.” They did not wish to hear Him, and they will not wish to hear us either. We shall have the same experience and discover that there is no room for us in the inn—for us either—in society, or “in the camp”. There will be lack of understanding on the part of unbelievers in general, and the conflict that follows from that. All this is described in detail in Scripture. When it happens to us, we should realise that it is in order that we might learn to know the Lord; that, as it were, in the future we might speak with Him and compare experiences, having gone through the same things as He did. Perhaps at a different level, but fundamentally it is the same. That is practical life—and through that too we learn to know Him. We never meet Him in person, we do not know what He looked like; we know Him only from the Scriptures, and yet we come to know Him in a dynamic way—not by study alone, but in the practical course of life. That happens only when we are His followers. We should run the same race of faith that He ran; we should take up our cross, bear with those who contradict, and remain faithful to the Word of God, looking to the joy that is set before us. The further we go along that path, the better we shall get to know the Lord. It happens actively, in the doing. In that way our bond with the Lord grows, and our love abounds more and more—also our fellowship with one another, our love for one another. We are all in the same boat; we learn to understand and accept one another better.

When we serve one another—and thus serve the Church—we are also walking in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus, who serves the Church. That is His present service. The thought is indeed that we serve now and shall reign with Him later; but that reigning function will also be, in truth, a serving function.

We learn about the Lord Jesus that He served on earth and was humbled, and that on that basis He was exalted to the right hand of God (Hebrews 12:2, and elsewhere). That has already happened; He sits on the throne. Nevertheless, Scripture teaches that the Lord Jesus still has a serving function. God has appointed Him High Priest of the New Covenant. He has placed Him in an office, given Him responsibility; and of Him it is then said that He is faithful to Him that appointed Him. In that function He serves the Church in practice, for that is the responsibility He has been given, and He carries it out willingly.

When Hebrews says of the Lord Jesus that He said, “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God” (Hebrews 10:7,), I am of the opinion that this is not said in connection with His incarnation, but with His resurrection from the dead.

There it is linked with His appointment as High Priest. That did not happen at His birth, but at His resurrection. To this day the Lord bears responsibility towards God, who has given Him that responsibility. He still fulfils a serving function, even while He sits upon the throne and has received glory. It will be exactly the same for us in the future.
The tragedy is that this present High Priestly function of Christ is often not known. People have never come that far, or they know of it and have reasoned it away again. Yet this is precisely what is meant by the present work of Christ: that Christ, raised from the dead and glorified, carries out a work in the service of God and bears responsibility. And it will be just so with us. After the rapture of the Church we too shall be crowned with glory and appointed as sons. But that does not mean that our priestly function, which we already have now, will then cease. On the contrary: it means that then, more than ever and more intensely than ever, we shall exercise a serving function. That is why we are still here now: to practise and learn that here. Children are meant to become mature, perfect, and to learn to bear responsibility. They do this, in practice, by differing in nothing from a servant, although they are heirs of all things. If one does not learn this here, one will not learn it there either. That opportunity will not be given.
I think that in Philippians 1:9 the word “love” stands above the other two, “knowledge” and “discernment”. That does not take away the fact that, on another occasion, I would be inclined to say that love is the same as knowledge—and that too can be demonstrated. We must remember that concepts are not always sharply defined, and often overlap. Love is, after all, fellowship; and the verb “to know” in Scripture also means to have fellowship. We translate it “to know” or sometimes “to know intimately”, but originally it is the same word. “To know” in the biblical sense is regarded as synonymous with the practising of love—and that is indeed what it is, not only on the sexual level. What is expressed in sexuality is really the expression of the essence of life as such. To “know” is to practise love; to know is “to have fellowship with”, “to share in”, “to be one with”. All of this is simply called love. To love is to know.
Many people can do something and actually do it in practice out of “loving doing it”: they find pleasure in it. It is sharing in something, being involved in it, giving oneself to it. It is all one and the same matter—the practical exercise of fellowship. That is what verse 9 in Philippians 1 is emphatically about.

Philippians 1:10
That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;
We tend to think that “without offence” refers first of all to not giving offence to other people. I think that is a misunderstanding. It is included, but it is not the first thought. This expression occurs three times in Scripture.
The first time is in Acts 24:16:

> Acts 24:16
> And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.

“Offence” there is the same word. Notice the order: God is mentioned first. One should not give offence to God; but because that is thought to be a strange idea, it seems to have been softened or obscured somewhat in some renderings. Yet that is what it says: always to be “without offence”, to have a conscience that gives no offence toward God and toward men—in that order, of course. This ties in directly with the principle that “we ought to obey God rather than men.” The same order.

The second occurrence is:

> 1 Corinthians 10:32
> Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God:

Here it is about people indeed, but even then it should be clear that when we do give offence, we are, first of all, giving offence to God, or to Christ—to vex Him, as it were. That is how we should understand it here in Philippians too.

The word “thereof” in “the things that differ thereof” can safely be omitted in English. If there is difference, it is always difference between one thing and another.

“Till the day of Christ” links back to verse 6, which said that God has begun a good work in us and that His purpose is to complete it “until the day of Jesus Christ”. We have seen that this means “until our manifestation before the judgment seat of Christ”—“that every one may receive the things done in his body” (2 Corinthians 5:10).

So when verse 10 says again, “till the day of Christ”, it means that the things just mentioned really do contribute to our reward. They are decisive for the verdict of that day—for the judgment, for the decision of the court. Where love abounds more and more, together with knowledge and discernment, there will be reward in the day of Christ—a crown. And the same applies to what is said in the first half of verse 10: “that ye may approve things that are excellent” (or literally: “that differ”). That too is evidently of importance for our salvation in the sense of our future portion; we shall receive reward for it.

First, the meaning of “that ye may approve things that are excellent / that differ”. Some have taken this verse out of its context and treated it in isolation. One then finds differences everywhere in the Bible. One claims, for instance, that sanctification is something different from cleansing. Or that the Church as the Body of Christ in 1 Corinthians is different from the Church as the Body of Christ in Ephesians: that in 1 Corinthians there is mention of a “head” that is not Christ—and so, one says, there must be two different bodies of Christ, and therefore two different churches. All that sort of thing.

Or people study the four Gospels, lay them side by side, and search for differences. They “discover” three different entries into Jerusalem, three cleansings of the temple, five different addresses on the last things, and so forth. Why? Because some different words are used, or the order of events is slightly different, and they conclude that these must be entirely different events. That is a rather strange idea, but they defend it by saying that we are to “approve the things that differ”. There are, they say, things which appear similar, but of which we ought to know the difference.

You understand that this leads nowhere. It all falls into the category of theories which have no positive practical effect at all—only negative effect. Verse 10 itself tells us what it is really about. What is to increase is love, so that… and then follows verse 10. When you meet the word “that” or “so that” (“opdat”), you should usually lay the two “that”-clauses side by side, because they are talking about the same goal. The one says that love would abound “in knowledge and in all judgment”, that ye may approve the things that differ—or, in other words, that ye may “be sincere and without offence”. It is the same thing in different words.
“Sincere” means something like “simple”, or “single”—without double motives or second agendas. “Simple” in that sense means “single”, “onefold”—there is only one aim. To be sincere is to have only one goal in view, not several at once. The problem with having more than one goal is that sooner or later we pursue one at the expense of the other. Here it is about one thing only, as Paul says in Philippians 3:14:

> Philippians 3:14
> I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

There is but one mark. Singleness and sincerity are presented in Scripture as the ideal of the believer: that we should be simple and sincere, pursuing only one aim, and nothing else.
This explains the phrase, “that ye may approve things that are excellent / that differ”. To “approve things that differ” pointedly implies that there are at least two things. But since we are to pursue only one goal—to be sincere or “straight”—it follows that one of the two cannot be right. If we have two aims, one of them is wrong. We should have no ulterior motive.
That this is the meaning is evident from what the apostle says in verses 15 and 16: there he speaks of those who preach the gospel with wrong motives—envy, strife, contention. Paul rejoices that Christ is preached, yet he makes clear that such ulterior motives should not be there. We should have but one thing in view, and thus be sincere. We are to “prove the things that differ”, that deviate; a difference is, after all, a deviation. And “prove” here means to test by practical experience. It has nothing to do with mere theory; it is about the practical life, in which we are to be sincere—no ulterior motives—and thus “without offence”.
For this we shall be rewarded. It is exactly the same principle as that of running the race. One runs the race, and “is temperate in all things” (1 Corinthians 9:24–25). One lays aside everything that does not belong, everything that should not play a role. One does but one thing: runs the race (Hebrews 12), with the crown in view at the end—or as it says here, “till the day of Christ”.
If one thing characterised the life of the Lord Jesus Himself, it was this: He had but one aim, namely the fulfilment of His commission and the glorifying of His Father. In practice He seemingly took no notice of anything else, however much it cost Him.
In 2 Peter 3:1 we read of a “pure mind”:

> 2 Peter 3:1
> …I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance:

A pure or sincere mind is one that is directed to one thing. And in 1 Corinthians 5:8 we read:

> 1 Corinthians 5:8
> Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

“Sincerity and truth” are treated there as near synonyms. Truth is, by definition, one; there can only be one truth. Sincerity corresponds to that; it also means that there is only one thing in view. In 2 Corinthians 1:12 Paul speaks of living “in simplicity and godly sincerity”:

> 2 Corinthians 1:12
> For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity… we have had our conversation in the world…

Two expressions with essentially the same meaning. Both mean that life is single, not double; it is about one thing.

“Till the day of Christ” is linked here directly with “without offence”. This concerns Christ first of all. It is He whom we serve, and from Him we shall receive reward. That is the primary focus. It is exactly the same as the “good work” which God has begun in us “until the day of Jesus Christ” (verse 6) and for which we shall receive reward.

This means that what is written here in verses 9, 10 and 11 is to be regarded as the work of God in us. This is the work which God does in us and which He wishes to complete until the day of Jesus Christ. His purpose is to work in us in such a way that our love may abound more and more in knowledge and in all discernment—in other words, that we might be led by the Holy Spirit into all truth. That comes to the same thing. We are to come to knowledge, also through experience—through “acknowledgment” and “discernment”, as the words here say.

To “be sincere and without offence” is not something we can achieve in ourselves. The thought is that God Himself will do this work in us. It is to happen through “the love of God [which] is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us” (Romans 5:5,). This is a description of the work of God, and later in the epistle it is explained more fully:

> Philippians 2:13
> For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

It is God’s work in us. What is required for this is not so much that we struggle to increase love or knowledge or discernment, but that we surrender ourselves to the Lord, and He will do His work in us in this way, until the day of Christ, because there that work reaches its completion—there it is rewarded. The development spoken of here does not continue after the rapture of the Church. This work finds its conclusion there, in that it is there rewarded. It is a work that takes place while we live here on earth, while we are still in the flesh.

Philippians 1:11

Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

We do not give offence—at least not to Christ—when we are filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God. Hence I stress strongly that the main point is that we should not give offence to God or to Christ. Our lives should bear “fruits of righteousness”. It is stated expressly that these are “by Jesus Christ”. It is God—or Christ—who works them in us. This ties in exactly with what we saw before.

The earthly work of the Lord Jesus, during His walk here below, had as its highest purpose the glorifying of God. He says so Himself in John 17. What is said here in Philippians is that the present work of Christ has precisely the same purpose. He would fill us with the fruits of righteousness, of which it is said that they are “by Jesus Christ”. It is Jesus Christ in us who brings them forth. And it is “unto the glory and praise of God”. The present work of Christ has, just as His past work, the glory of God as its goal.

There are a few other expressions for this in Scripture, such as “the fruit of the Spirit”. Here it is called “the fruits of righteousness” because the subject is approached from a slightly different side. In Galatians 5 it is called “the fruit of the Spirit” because there the Spirit is set over against the flesh, and “the works of the flesh” are contrasted with “the fruit of the Spirit”—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, and so forth. These are all, so to speak, by-products of love. Love brings forth joy, peace, longsuffering.

In Galatians there is a double contrast: flesh and Spirit, and works and fruit. “Works” indicate activity as such; “fruit” indicates an activity that arises by nature. One does not need to do anything to make fruit grow on a tree. It happens of itself. It can be hindered, but if no one hinders it, fruit appears of its own accord. So it is with the fruit of the Spirit in us. It arises of itself. It comes out of the nature, the life within. Where the Spirit dwells in us, and where that Spirit is our life, the Spirit will bear fruit. That fruit comes to expression through our bodies, that is, through our actions and conduct.

Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness may sound like abstract concepts, but in reality they are not. They describe a particular disposition—or better still, a particular way of life. However abstract the terms may seem, they mean nothing if they are not expressed in practice.

It is exactly the same here. Here they are called “the fruits of righteousness”. In Hebrews 12:11 we also read of “the peaceable fruit of righteousness”:

> Hebrews 12:11
> Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness…

Hebrews and Philippians present exactly the same truth. It is therefore remarkable that some regard the Epistle to the Philippians as “distinctly church truth”, and the Epistle to the Hebrews as “not church truth”. They actually teach the same things—with different terms, but different terms do not necessarily express different meanings.

The subject is righteousness as such. We are justified—in Christ. It is also just, or righteous, that we should now live by grace. That is in accordance with the law:

> Romans 3:26
> To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

The law is fulfilled, and in a lawful way our sins have received their just recompence. “The law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth” (Romans 7:1), but we are regarded as having died with Christ. Therefore it is in full agreement with the law that we no longer live under the law, but under grace (Galatians). And that grace is what works these things in us. We live out of it, and it will come to rule in our lives. That is called “fruit”. “Fruits of righteousness” do not mean a kind of life that we must force upon ourselves against our own nature, simply because it is required. Many people think this is the case. That is the doing of “works of the law”. What Philippians speaks of is that this way of life arises naturally, as it were, from our heart—from our nature. It is indeed our new nature, but that in itself is still theory. We cannot point within ourselves and say: this is my old nature here, and that is my new nature there. The old nature we can often recognise soon enough; the new nature we cannot delineate so easily.

When we do something wrong we say, “That is my old nature”, or: “It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me” (Romans 7:17,). But when we have done something good, we are inclined to think that that is our new nature. Yet that cannot be proven. In practice we cannot draw the line.

Moreover, the biblical thought is that the new nature simply becomes our nature. As John the Baptist puts it:

> John 3:30
> He must increase, but I must decrease.

The new man in us must develop; the old must disappear. In any case, it becomes one whole—we are who we are. The intention is that we should be changed into the image of God’s Son, changed in form “from glory to glory” (2 Corinthians 3:18). That is the change of our inner man—not so much an exchange of one nature for another, as the transformation of our disposition as such.

We may say, “I am that old man, and Christ dwells in me.” That is biblical language, but at the same time Philippians says that our life is Christ —“For to me to live is Christ” (Philippians 1:21,). It is about one being, one person. The distinction should not be overworked. The intention is that we ourselves change through growth, through increase in love, knowledge and discernment. Then we shall bring forth fruit that springs from what we have become.

We do certain things—we serve the Lord—not because it is required, but because we cannot do otherwise. It is indeed a free choice, but even that choice is there because the alternative is unattractive to us.

Luther is a good illustration of this—if only by his famous words. He said, “Here I stand; I can do no other.” Historically speaking, he could have done otherwise. He did not have to appear before the Diet in Worms. He

had already gone into hiding. He came of his own accord. He was asked to, but he was a free man at that moment. And yet he said: “Here I stand; I can do no other.” I think that was a completely honest statement. One may theoretically have another choice, but one does not want it. One simply does what is in the heart, and serves the Lord. That is how it should be.

The problem is that this is often not recognised. People read in the Bible that, as children of God, they ought to live in a certain way, and they therefore try to do so. But this brings no real satisfaction, and they do not understand the difference between “works of the law” and “works of faith”. They cannot see the distinction between “good works” and “works of the law”, because in both cases their idea is simply that “it must be done”.

But it does not have to be in that sense. The point is that as we grow in knowledge and abound in love, this will automatically bring forth fruit. Love, after all, is the greatest power in creation, if only because “God is love” (1 John 4:8). His life will grow in us; we will not hinder it, and we will live out of these things.

“Fruits of righteousness” are the fruits of the Spirit, or simply the results of the life we have received—of our justification, of righteousness. And all of this is “by Jesus Christ”, the One who works it in us. The aim of it is “the glory and praise of God”.

These two words—“glory” and “praise”—are also used of what we shall . And that is not surprising, for the servant works for his Lord, yet the firstfruits of his labour are, as it were, for himself. That is what he is paid with. Where it is about the glory and praise of God, we ourselves shall receive glory and:

> Philippians 3:14
> …the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

We are called to sonship, to glory. The prize is the formal appointment as son, or the receiving of a crown.

Philippians 1:12

But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;

What has happened to him, we know: the man was in prison in Rome, and from that imprisonment he wrote this epistle. And although we would naturally be inclined to think that such a thing must be harmful for the spread or progress of the gospel—for the work of God which was to be carried out especially by the apostle Paul—Paul says the very opposite: that it has actually served the furtherance of the gospel.

That is a very important truth, because it completely contradicts our ordinary human way of thinking. We would say: “He is in prison, so now he cannot do his work.” Paul says the opposite: it is going very well with the spread of the gospel. It is true that he himself cannot go out personally to proclaim the message, but he explains that precisely through his position in Rome, others are doing it. There are more than one of them, so that the work multiplies.

Paul’s position in Rome had, first of all, the purpose that he should make the gospel known to kings and those in high authority. In Acts we read that, during his imprisonment, an angel of the Lord appears to Paul and tells him he must not be afraid, but that he must stand before rulers and kings. That was the Lord’s intention: that he should bear witness before the Gentiles, before Israel, and especially before those in high position—the “rulers of this world”, so to speak. And his imprisonment was a very effective way to reach them.

We should always keep in mind the position the apostle held there in Rome. The point is that Paul would not have been a prisoner at all—or at least, not for long—if he had not appealed unto Caesar. He went into higher appeal consciously. When he stood trial in Caesarea, they could find no guilt in him; but he had already beforehand appealed to Caesar. Therefore he had to be sent to Rome as a prisoner. That was his own decision. He was, in that sense, a prisoner by choice, and he could only make that choice because he was a Roman citizen. Paul the Jew could never have done this; Paul the Roman could. His position in Rome was therefore, by definition, the position of a Roman citizen—freely chosen, and in that position the Lord would use him.

The Lord used Paul—the apostle of the Gentiles—to bring the gospel into the imperial court itself. When he had to give his defence, he had to set out the gospel and speak of Jesus Christ. As the emperor’s prisoner he had to speak before the highest authorities in Rome. Under Roman law a citizen who was in custody could appeal to Caesar; that was his right. For Paul this was a remarkable way of gaining access to the palace. It made little difference to him, for he already regarded himself as “the prisoner of Jesus Christ”, not because he was in chains outwardly, but because every believer, in truth, is a prisoner of Christ Jesus.

Even in the Epistle to the Ephesians, written around the same time, he develops this thought at length. He even takes Old Testament expressions from Psalm 68—about captivity and taking captives—and applies them to the Church. We are, in fact, prisoners, slaves of Christ Jesus: set outside the world-system, removed from this present evil world and the power of darkness, and placed in the service of the Lord.

Philippians 1:13

So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places;

“My bonds” does indeed refer to imprisonment, but not merely to his Roman imprisonment. It points above all to his bonds in Christ. That is what had become manifest to all—not only to those who held some official position in the judgement hall, but to everyone connected with the situation.

We usually say that Paul “sat in prison”, because that is our expression. But in practice his situation meant that he was, within the city of Rome, free to go where he wished while awaiting trial—most likely under guard. It is very probable that, whenever he went outside, he was chained to a Roman soldier so that he could not escape. This was what we would call “open custody”—a recognised Roman arrangement.

He lived in his own rented lodging; he was not in a dark dungeon. Personally, I consider it quite possible that Paul had rooms in one of the wings of the “British palace” in Rome. In any case, he certainly met the British ruler, who, I am convinced, came to faith in part through Paul’s ministry. That is a conclusion I draw from Scripture. There we see, as it were, “Joseph” and “Benjamin” together.
The British monarch was regarded as the king of the ten tribes—the direct heir of Joseph through Ephraim. And in Paul we have the chief man of the tribe of Benjamin. Whether or not he was that officially and legally is another matter; in practice he fulfilled that role. He functioned as Benjamin, the “lamp of the LORD” by Judah—representing Joseph and the ten tribes, and the promises and glory and birthright of Joseph in relation to Judah. That was Benjamin’s task. In any case it was fulfilled by the apostle Paul, and I therefore think that he can be seen as, in some sense, the official representative of the tribe of Benjamin.

Philippians 1:14
And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.
He is not speaking here about “brethren according to the flesh”, not about Jews. In Rome he is there as the Roman citizen. Personally I would punctuate the sentence a little differently than our English text does: “And many of the brethren, waxing confident by my bonds in the Lord, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.”
As it usually stands, one is left asking: in what have they gained confidence? In Paul? In the judgement hall? In the emperor? The point is that they gained confidence in the Lord. Because they gained more confidence in the Lord, they dared far more to speak the Word fearlessly. From this we can see that it was generally felt among the believers that Paul’s case was going well, that things seemed to be turning out positively for him, and that the judge would in the end again declare that he must be released. From the Roman point of view there was really only one issue: whether Paul had done anything conflicting the Roman law. Where religious issues were concerned, the only question was whether Paul had broken any part of Roman religious law.
Under Roman law Paul had done nothing wrong. For if God were to express Himself in an “image”, He would do so in man himself: first and foremost in the Lord Jesus Christ, and then, in a derivative sense, in the believers. We are predestined to be “conformed to the image of his Son” (Romans 8:29). That is not in conflict with Roman law. So things did indeed look good for Paul in legal terms.
As a result, the brethren gained confidence, and dared to speak the Word more boldly and without fear. This, Paul says, turned out “to the furtherance of the gospel”. He may have been restricted and unable to travel, but it turned out that there were many others who stepped in and met the need.

Philippians 1:15
Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:
Two opposite motives are presented as reasons for preaching the gospel. The latter is clear enough: some preach Christ “of good will”—they do it sincerely, from the heart. But others do it “of envy and strife”. Envy, rivalry, jealousy—these things were invented by the devil. It is remarkable that such motives could be used as a reason to preach the gospel. Paul therefore immediately explains this further.

Philippians 1:16
The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:
They preach Christ with hidden motives, namely to make things harder for Paul. He is restricted in his movements; he does not find that pleasant; and while he cannot go about freely, there are others who preach the gospel in order to spite him.
From ancient times people have tried to gain power over believers, because believers submit themselves to One only, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ. From an earthly point of view, that leaves at least one vacancy—and probably many more. All those Christians must have some human “leader”, must they not? You cannot, so people reason, allow the common people, “which knoweth not the law” (to use the Pharisees’ expression), to wander about like sheep without a shepherd.
Since Paul was evidently not concerned to exercise dominion, and was in any case not in a position to use his authority or influence, some “vacancies” seemed to open up in the wider area around Rome—in practice, the whole known world. Others jumped into the gap in the “market” created by the apparent withdrawal of the apostle. The same thing still happens today—often with even worse motives—namely, to push Paul aside.

Philippians 1:17
But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.
Paul says that he is “set for the defence of the gospel”. That expression is broader than Rome alone. The apostle Paul has been given responsibility for the proclamation of the gospel in all the world. He has been set for that purpose. That may startle us a little, but on the other hand we are quite used to the idea that he stands as the great example for the entire Church. As the apostle of this present dispensation, apostle of the Gentiles, he occupies a position which, in practice, is independent of and above all the other apostles.
We see also that he is the one who appoints others, or sends others out. Paul is “set for the defence of the gospel”—not only in Rome, but in the world in general. He will have to give account to the Lord for this. The gospel has been committed to him:

> 1 Timothy 1:11
> According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.

He is a steward of the mystery. He regarded himself as responsible for it, as is evident at least from his involvement with the various assemblies. This means he also felt responsible for what others were doing, and for the way they preached the gospel. Evidently others understood that too—and precisely because Paul's ability to travel was restricted, they began to preach.

Philippians 1:18

What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

Whatever the motives, he rejoices. He says he understands perfectly well what is going on—what could, humanly speaking, have spoiled his joy—but it does not do so. In verse 16 he had said, "The one preach Christ of contention…", that is, they do preach Christ, they do preach the gospel. And in verse 18 he adds that, in this, he rejoices.

He is not speaking here, at least not primarily, about a distortion of the message or a perversion of the gospel. He assumes that the gospel—in short, Christ—is being preached. He is not there dealing with the content of the message, but with the motives with which it is proclaimed.

At the word "pretence" many think of the "veil" in 2 Corinthians 3, even though it is not the same word. There, the veil is closely linked with the law. That is easy to understand, because in nearly all Paul's epistles we see deviations from the gospel associated with the introduction of law into the message. Law easily comes to lie like a cover over the truth of the New Covenant. Law is a veil over the heart, the eyes, even over the Bible itself.

Some therefore read verse 18 as if those preaching "under a cloak" had corrupted the message and gone over to preaching law. But that would be no reason at all for Paul to rejoice. Yet here he says pointedly: "I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." If we look up those passages in which Paul speaks of law being brought into the message, we shall see that he uses the strongest language against it. In Galatians he says:

> Galatians 5:12
> I would they were even cut off which trouble you.

In modern plain language: I wish they were dead.

In another place:

> 1 Timothy 1:6–7
> From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling;
> Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm.

He says they do not know what they are talking about; they are foolish, because they are not truly using their minds. Paul's words there are very strong indeed. But here, in Philippians 1, he says: "I rejoice, and will rejoice." So the "cloak" here must mean something else.

A clearer parallel is found in:

> 1 Peter 2:16
> As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.

It does not matter much whether the Greek word in Philippians 1 is exactly the same as in 1 Peter 2; the idea is similar. Here, Peter says we are free, and yet we are not to use our liberty as a “cloke of maliciousness”—as a cover, an excuse, or a licence for evil. This is like the Roman idea of “free custody”: on the one hand free, on the other hand still a prisoner. We have liberty, but we are still bondservants of Christ.
Some people misuse that liberty to get involved in evil things. They use freedom as an excuse, a pretext, a “free pass”, so to speak. The same idea lies behind the “cloak” in Philippians 1: circumstances are used as an excuse and a pretext. With those circumstances as their cover, some are stirred up to preach the gospel—but the motives that stir them up are not good. They are false pretences, serving as a cloak.
It is similar in:

> Galatians 5:13
> For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.

Do not use your liberty as a pretext for the flesh. That is much the same idea as using it as a “cloke of maliciousness”. In Galatians the word “occasion” is used, but the thought is similar.
So in Philippians 1 I do not understand “under a cloak” as meaning “under the veil of the law”, but as referring to those false motives—envy, contention, rivalry—from which some nevertheless preach the gospel.
The term “in truth” in Philippians 1:18 may then describe the motives: preaching in truth, that is, in faithfulness and sincerity. “Truth” is very closely related to “faithfulness”. One can preach the gospel, not out of faithfulness to the Lord, not “in truth”, but out of faithfulness only to oneself. In that case, the preaching is not truly “in truth” any more.
In English “truth” is truth, and faithfulness is closely related, and in Hebrew the same root lies behind Torah, “the law”, “God’s word”—that which is faithful and sure. So when verse 18 speaks of preaching “in truth”, it is talking not about the content of the message but about the motives behind its proclamation.
And Paul says it makes no difference to him, as long as Christ is preached.

Philippians 1:19
For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,
It is about the Spirit—and therefore the mind—of Jesus Christ. That is what is to be developed in us; and when that happens, we rejoice at the preaching of the gospel. All the surrounding circumstances, all that lies around it, Paul leaves to the Lord. He only mentions that he is aware of it, but it does not govern his attitude.
If we serve the Lord, do we really know with what motives we do it? It is easy enough to think of some good, pious motives why we might do certain things. It is just as easy to think of some less noble motives lurking in the background. Paul shows us that, in practice, we should not be too occupied with analysing our motives.
His joy over the preaching of the gospel—even when it is often done to spite him—“turns to his salvation”, that is, to his future reward. It brings

him spiritual gain. Here we are dealing with the mind or disposition of Christ—called here “the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ”. In practice this is the life of Christ, the mind of Christ, which he has. In line with that disposition, he rejoices in the preaching of the gospel.

Philippians 1:20

According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.

“Expectation and hope” are really the same thought, though “hope” has a slightly more positive flavour than mere expectation. This verse again ties back to verses 12 and 13. It has always been so, and it is so now in his imprisonment: Christ is magnified in his body. How things are with others is their responsibility. As long as Paul lives, Christ will be magnified in his body. That is what the man was called to, on the road to Damascus. Immediately afterwards it is said of him that Christ would be glorified in him—in his body and through his sufferings.

That is the point: that Christ should be glorified in our bodies. The verse continues: “whether it be by life, or by death.”

Strictly speaking, however, we should read: “by death” in the sense of “through death”—that is, through death and beyond it. The thought is resurrection and life on the other side of death. This is contained in the preposition “through”: the Greek word dia.

The meaning of prepositions in Greek is strongly affected by the case which follows them. Here dia is followed by the genitive case. In that construction it has the sense of passing through something—“into and out of”. It does not mean “by means of death”, as if death itself were the means, but “through death”: into death and out again, in resurrection. The thought is therefore not fixed on death itself, but on what lies beyond it. We see the same idea in Psalm 23:

> Psalm 23:4
> Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me…

This is not about the moment of dying alone, but about what is beyond: that there is no evil left to fear except one—that one might never come out of that valley again. The thought, therefore, is resurrection, but the road toward it is not a pleasant one. The same is true here in Philippians. This same Greek construction—dia with the genitive—is found, for example, in:

> Romans 5:10
> For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.

We could read: “by the death of his Son”, but Paul is really pointing to His death and resurrection as one whole process. In verses 6–8 he has spoken of Christ’s dying; in verse 9 of His blood and of being “saved from wrath through him”. In verse 10 we then read of “death” and “life”. It might at first look like a simple parallel, but the thought is deeper.

We are reconciled to God not merely by Christ's dying, but by His dying and rising again. If Christ had not risen, we would not be reconciled to God at all. To be reconciled to God means to be brought into a new relationship with Him, to be joined to Him. If "one died for all" and that were the end of the story, there would be no new relationship; on the contrary, whatever relation had existed would have definitively ended. We are reconciled to God through a process: His death and His resurrection. That is the force of "through death" here—dia with the genitive.

When "atonement" is used for the covering of sins, then, indeed, the death of Christ alone is in view—without immediate reference to His resurrection. That is the Old Testament thought of making atonement, covering sins, as expressed in the mercy seat. But reconciliation with God in the sense of being brought to Him as sons is something else. It comes through death and resurrection together.

A similar expression occurs in:

> Colossians 1:21–22
> And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled
> In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight:

This "body of his flesh" is not merely the body of Jesus as He hung upon the cross, as if the crucifixion itself completed reconciliation in this sense. Our sins were indeed atoned for there, but we were not yet reconciled to God in the sense of being brought into living union with Him. That reconciliation, as here, is "in the body of his flesh through death"—again dia with the genitive—death and resurrection as one whole.

We who now share in the Body of Christ are reconciled in that Body—in the new creation. In that position, as members of the Body of Christ, we are "holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight". The focus is not on His dying alone, but on what followed—His resurrection and the new creation.

The same expression is found a fourth time in:

> Hebrews 2:14
> Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

If we leave aside all grammatical detail and simply note that in these four passages the same expression "through death" (dia + genitive) appears, it becomes clear what it must mean. In Hebrews 2:14 it can not mean simply "by dying". If death were the end, then it would be the devil—the one who had the power of death—who would have destroyed Christ. But Hebrews says that Christ through death destroyed the one who had the power of death. This can only be true if He not only entered death, but also came out of it.

By rising from the dead He has brought to nothing the power of death and the one who wielded that power. Death is indeed an enemy, but it is an enemy that can be conquered. The Lord has conquered death by rising from it. If we understand "through death" as "through death and out the other side", then what is said fits perfectly.

So, coming back to Philippians 1:20, the thought is this: whether Paul remains alive here, or goes through death to be with the Lord, in either case Christ will be magnified in his body.

Philippians 1:21
For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.
Dying is gain for him because death does not lead him into death as such, but carries him through death, because death has already been defeated. Ordinarily, dying is never gain; but for Paul it is. For, whereas death by nature brings man into the state of death, we as New Testament believers are, through death, brought past death. We go through it.
Exactly that is explained more fully in verse 23 (which follows in your text).

Philippians 1:23–24
For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:
Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.
On the one hand he has a desire “to depart” – that is, to be loosed, to depart and, through death, to be with Christ. In that case dying is gain. On the other hand he wants to remain “in the flesh”. Then, for him, “to live is Christ”; then Christ is magnified in his body by life. And that does not apply only to the apostle Paul, but to all believers. The intention is that God should be glorified in our body.
“Ye are bought with a price,” wrote the apostle to the Corinthians; “therefore glorify God in your body.” (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:20) Peter says that the purpose is that, in the time which we still have “in the flesh”, we should do the will of God rather than “the lusts of men”. (cf. 1 Peter 4:2)
Sadly, the expression in verse 23 is often torn right out of its context, because it is more or less the only verse people feel they can use to support the teaching that believers “go to heaven” when they die. There is scarcely a verse in the Bible that says such a thing directly. The common idea is that “heaven” is simply the hereafter for the good, and since we are counted among the “good”, when this present life ends we naturally go to that hereafter called “heaven”. People hardly form any clear idea of it and therefore can speak very easily in such terms.
But the verse does not say what people like to read into it: it does not say “to depart, and to go to Christ”, or “to depart, and to go to heaven”. That is not what is written. To depart and to be with Christ is “far better”; but he has already said in verse 21, “to live is Christ”. And in many other places Paul speaks about the life of Christ in us. So how could he now be saying that he wants to depart and go to Christ? The Lord Jesus Christ dwells in our hearts. How then could we “go to Him” in that absolute sense?
I do not believe he is saying “to depart and to go to Christ”, but rather: “to depart, and thus to be with Christ.” He was already with Christ. He was now bound with Christ, and afterwards he would be loosed and with Christ.

“Depart” (literally “to be loosed”) does not refer to the physical dissolution of the body. He regards life in the flesh, in the body, as a kind of prison – that is the negative way of looking at it. The body restricts him in his freedom, and restricts him in seeing the Lord Jesus Christ in glory.
We are in Christ and He is in us. In this life, in the body, we walk – if all is well – with Him and He with us. That does not have to wait for the body to be dissolved. What the apostle is really saying in this expression is that, if it depended purely on his own desire, he would rather be with Christ without this body, no longer hindered by the limitations of this fleshly, earthly, and even sinful body which inevitably restricts us. Paul counts it as a limitation.
We have become new creatures in Christ and truly belong in another body. Sometimes that may dawn on us more strongly – especially when bodily weakness or infirmity begins to trouble us. Then it becomes more apparent that our present body is a constraint. In that sense too, dying is gain: when we are loosed from this body, we are rid of those limitations.

Philippians 1:25
And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith;
The apostle is confident that he will remain in the flesh, and therefore not remain in Rome, for he says he will stay on and continue “with you all” – that is, with the Philippians. I have not the slightest doubt that he was in fact released from that imprisonment after two years, as we read at the end of Acts. After that he went out again on missionary journeys and visited many places in the East, in Asia Minor. He is sure and persuaded that he will visit the Philippians and serve them. For he is, after all, a servant of the Church.

Philippians 1:26
That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.
The Philippians would boast in Christ Jesus. That means they would put their trust in Christ and give Him the honour that belongs to Him. We are not to boast “in the flesh”, but in Christ, who is our boast.
We may also, in a certain sense, boast in what God has accomplished through us. The apostle does that at times: he also boasts in the Philippians, whom he counts as his “crown” and joy. They are to the honour of the work of Christ as it has been carried out through him. In practice this means that together they rejoice in the work of God which is being done by them – by Paul on the one hand, and by the Philippians on the other.
With that we are, in fact, back at 1:6 – the “good work” which God has begun in us and which He will also perform. That work is going on in the Philippians; it is going on in Paul; it is shared between them; and, of course, it is also going on in us. After this, the apostle really turns to the Philippians themselves directly and addresses them.

Philippians 1:27

Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

These words immediately remind us of Ephesians 4:1, and there too he then speaks of the unity of the Spirit and the unity of the mind, even more fully than here in Philippians. There he speaks first of all about “the unity” in the Church – which is, qfellowship. In that sense “unity of the Church” is a pleonasm. The Church is a unity by definition.

If therefore God is doing a good work in us, that work is, first and foremost, in the interests of that unity. It is not simply a question of theory, but of the practical outworking. We may well know the doctrine that we are one in Christ, but it is of very little value if it remains purely theoretical and has no consequences in the way we actually live. Our life should serve the promotion of that fellowship, that unity.

In any case, the present work of Christ consists in creating, that is, promoting, that unity – also in practice. Christ is not called the Head of the Body for nothing, that Body of which all the members are joined together. They are not joined directly to one another in the first instance, but each one is joined to the Head; if that were not so, they would not be members of the Body at all. The unity of the Church lies in Christ, in whom we are one. That is worked out in detail in Ephesians and Colossians, where it is said that Christ “hath made both one” – not only Jew and Gentile, who are one in Christ, but all believers as one Body.

In 1 Corinthians too, the unity of the Church is developed at length. The practical unity and the promotion of that unity is the will of God – and therefore also the ongoing work of Christ. It is the goal of His work. For as far as we say that He is our High Priest and makes propitiation for our sins, that is also with a view to this unity. We see that, for example, in:

> 1 John 1:7
> But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

Only when we walk in the light do we actually, in practice, have fellowship one with another. The unity of believers is possible because sin does not rule, but grace. Therefore we have nothing to reproach one another with. We are not to abuse this as an excuse for the flesh or as a “cloke of maliciousness”, but it remains true that where grace reigns, we have fellowship with one another. Life out of grace promotes the practical unity of the Church. Without grace, there is no unity in the Church.

From verse 27 we see that the practical walk of the believer has certain aims and is subject to certain norms. Those norms are not supplied by the law, as most believers think—and some even teach openly. We are to “walk worthy of the gospel of Christ”. Or, as in Ephesians 4:1, “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,” and elsewhere “worthy of God”.

If we do not put parallel passages next to Philippians 1:27, we might think that the “gospel of Christ” here refers only to the message by which we

became children of God. The gospel is indeed “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.” (Romans 1:16–17) That is certainly true. But the gospel is far more than simply the power unto new birth. We were sinners and are now children of God – that is wonderful; but even that is not the full gospel. Salvation consists of all that God gives and intends to give. Our new birth is merely the first beginning of salvation – undoubtedly the most important event in our whole life, when we come to faith and are born again. But it is a mistake to think that everything is finished there, and that God’s work on us is complete, apart perhaps from our bodily redemption in the future.

After birth there must be growth and upbringing with “the sincere milk of the word” (as Peter says), and afterwards “strong meat” for the rest of life (as Paul says). The good work God began when we were born again. From that first day, God began His work (Philippians 1:6). From then on we are in the process of obtaining salvation. As children of God we are to grow up into sonship.

We may not read all of that immediately in Philippians 1:27, but we do when we place the parallel text next to it:

> Ephesians 4:1
> I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

Insofar as we are “called”, we are called because we are already children of God. One must indeed be called in order to be saved, but that does not mean one is called in order to become a child of God. The calling comes at the point where we have believed. We are children of God, heirs of God; and we are called to suffer and to be placed as sons. Calling is calling to sonship, not to childhood. It is the calling of the child of God to become a son. We are called to glory, to sonship. In practice that comes to the same thing, but in theory there is a distinction. The glory we shall receive, to which we are called, is that of being placed as sons.

In Romans 8 we find all these terms together, and they explain each other. We are called to be conformed to the image of God’s Son; we are called that we might suffer with Him now, but also that, in the future, the glory should be revealed in us at the redemption – the “loosing” – of our body. That glory is the “placing as sons” – the huiothesia – unfortunately translated “adoption” or “adoption of children”, but in Greek it is the public appointment and placing as sons.

All this belongs to the gospel as it is now, in this present time, relevant to us as children of God. The preaching of the gospel so that men may come to faith is, for believers, no longer the point at issue; we have already taken that step. For us, what is now current is the present work of God on us, His children, that we may grow up to sonship. Everywhere in Scripture that speaks about the Church, the Body being built up and joined together, the growth of the Body – all that concerns the work Christ is doing on the Church in general and on the members in particular. That is our calling. We are called to glory, to sonship, but also to kingship and dominion with Christ.

We should walk in a way that is consistent with that calling – walk worthy of the gospel, with our eye upon what has been promised to us for the

future. There is a causal connection between our walk and what we shall receive on the basis of that calling. All are called to glory and sonship, but whether all receive that glory in the same measure is another question. That glory will differ from believer to believer. Even though we can speak of it under the same general terms, it is not identical. In 1 Corinthians 3 we read that we all build on the one foundation, but we may build with “gold, silver, precious stones” or with “wood, hay, stubble”. The fire will test each man’s work. He himself will be saved, “yet so as by fire”. That means that such a person was called to glory, just like any other believer, but that little has become of that glory in actual result.

We shall all, simply because we are children of God, receive a glorified body. Yet Scripture immediately adds that one glory will differ from another. There are degrees of glory. We are warned to “look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.” (2 John 8) The intention is that we should receive a full reward.

To walk worthy of the calling wherewith we are called is therefore oriented towards what we shall receive as reward. It is a walk based on what has happened in the past – that we have become children of God – but with a goal set in the future. That is also the sense of Philippians 1:27. The gospel is “the power of God unto salvation” in general, and elsewhere we read of “the gospel… to obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.” (cf. 2 Timothy 2:10) That is also the message of Philippians 2, where it is said that we are to “work out” our own salvation with fear and trembling. That cannot possibly refer to new birth, because this we cannot “work out” ourselves.

We find the same line again in:

> Colossians 1:9–10
> For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;
> That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;

This runs completely parallel to Philippians 1, where it was said that we should be “filled with… knowledge and all judgment.” Here we have “worthy of the gospel”, “worthy of the calling”, and now “worthy of the Lord” – all with the same intent: “unto all pleasing,” “fruitful in every good work.” The thought is that this knowledge – like the “knowledge and all feeling” in Philippians – is necessary in order to bear fruit and to walk worthy of our calling.

Philippians speaks about service, the serving of believers, and about knowing Him – to “know him, and the power of his resurrection” (Philippians 3:10). Knowing Him does not exist without serving Him, and we shall never serve Him rightly without knowing Him. The one supports and deepens the other. Together they lead to the fruit of the Spirit, the fruit of the light, in our lives – that is, a walk worthy of our calling, “worthy of the Lord” (Colossians 1:10).

1 Thessalonians 2:12
That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.

It is about the glory of His kingdom. We are called “unto his kingdom and glory”. We are to share the rule with Christ. In Thessalonians that is the central theme. We are to be conscious of these things – that is, to know them. It is not about how much we know, nor how complicated the knowledge is, but first that we are aware of the truths God has revealed. Otherwise it is impossible to live our lives in the light of them.

We should be conscious of our position. If we are not conscious that we are children of God and partakers of heavenly things, then in practice it is impossible really to serve the Lord here in the body. We would not know what to do. And inevitably, our life would slide back into being a life “under law”. That is why the law still has such power in people’s thinking. Not knowing how they should arrange their lives, they open the rule-book and say: “There it says how it must be.” But that is precisely not the point. God is not primarily concerned with whether we can live according to a set of imposed rules, whether He can keep us under control, whether we possess enough discipline; His concern is that, living from what dwells in our hearts, from what we believe and are conscious of, we serve Him and walk according to His will. Not because He imposes it from outside, but because His Word dwells in our hearts and we have become conscious of who we are.

If we truly know who we are, we will walk accordingly – unless we refuse to do so.

In Philippians 1:27 the word translated “conversation” (our “walk”) is not the ordinary verb for walking or going about, as in most other places. Here, and also in the related noun in Philippians 3:20, it is an expression built from polis (city) with a word related to “politics”. Politics concerns the laws and rules that apply to life in a polis, a city or state; one must observe them or things go wrong.

That is why some translate Philippians 3:20 as “our citizenship is in heaven”. The Authorised Version has: “our conversation is in heaven”. Both are good. Citizenship implies a certain way of life in accordance with the laws of the realm or city. Our walk is “in heaven”, and we walk in accordance with the principles that apply there. We belong to that realm, and the chief principle, as given here in Philippians, is that in those heavenly things we are prepared to serve – to be servants of the Lord, and in practice of one another. On that basis we shall be glorified in the future. By serving, we reach our glory. By endurance and service, we “work out” our ultimate salvation.

The word “work out” stands there, but I would not choose it myself without explanation, because it suggests that we are producing everything ourselves. That is not Paul’s meaning. It is true that this salvation, this glory, is not reached without such a walk. That walk is certainly connected with the “good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).

So it has to do with citizenship. If we have no consciousness of that citizenship, of our heavenly position, then none of this will come to

anything. And since we cannot develop that consciousness of heavenly things on the basis of our earthly experience – through what we see and feel – there is nothing left but to open our Bible and let ourselves be instructed by what stands written, and to make it our own. That awakens exactly that consciousness. It teaches us to see things we would never otherwise see – and, conversely, not to see things which we would otherwise see all too clearly.

Forgiving one another's sins, for instance, implies not seeing things which, as natural people, we would certainly see and dwell upon. That is living by grace. We see one another "in Christ" and therefore we see only sinners who are saved by grace and who now ought to live out of grace, with all the defects that still cling to them because they are bound to an earthly body. God has promised to do His work in us. We should be conscious of these things, and see one another in that light: in Christ, as new creatures, not yet perfect outwardly, but in whom the Lord is at work. We must indeed know that first.

One of the problems at Corinth was that they did not realise this and did not see themselves as citizens of a heavenly kingdom, but as better citizens of an earthly one—"better" because they were Christians, but still essentially citizens of this world. But that is not so; quite the opposite. The Epistle to the Galatians opens by saying that Christ "gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world" (Galatians 1:4). He has devoted Himself to a special work concerning the Church—that He might deliver us out of this present evil age. A theologian will say that God has already "translated us" out of death into life and out of darkness into His marvellous light. All that is true as a position, but in practice the question remains: do we actually walk in that light, or do we still live according to the patterns of this present evil age and the principles of "the god of this world"? One we are to lay aside; the other we are to live from.

This does not first concern how we occupy our time, but our mindset, our orientation, our expectation, our priorities – what we find important in life. How that works out in daily practice will differ for each of us, because we are different people in different situations. But it is our hope, our view of the future, that is decisive for the choices we make. That is what we have to learn. And the working out of that, in daily detail, is our own personal responsibility.

If we think that the Lord determines and directs and leads every step in our life in such a way that we have no responsibility, we are in fact withdrawing from the responsibility we do have to make our own choices out of what is in our hearts – out of what we believe and the expectation we have. We are to bear responsibility and so to know what we are doing —trusting the Lord, of course, but not handing all responsibility back to Him.

Philippians 1:27 also says: "that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel." If one believes and lives out of that faith, the conflict with the environment arises of itself. One enters the conflict simply by submitting oneself to the Word of God and to the gospel. One then runs up against those who have no interest in it, and

who also oppose it—who see it as dangerous, if only for themselves. One runs into those “who withstand”, as it is called in…

Philippians 1:28
28 And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.
The word “adversaries” (literally, those who set themselves against you) is chosen because in verse 27 the apostle has already spoken of us as believers “standing fast”. It is the same language he uses in Ephesians 4 when speaking of the unity of the Church, and when we come to the matter of standing we arrive at the well-known passage in Ephesians 6 about the whole armour of God:

> Ephesians 6:11
> 11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

What is called in Philippians 1 “your adversaries” is here simply the devil, or the wiles of the devil, for the devil ordinarily works upon us through other people. Many already have trouble enough with the inward conflict they wage with themselves, but that inward struggle plays no very great part in Scripture. The fight comes from without; it is brought to us from outside by the devil himself, who is the prince of this world. That is what we have to face. We therefore encounter adversaries — those who withstand us — and who thereby serve the devil.

> Ephesians 6:12–13
> 12 For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.
> 13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Though it may appear so, the struggle is not against flesh and blood. Those adversaries are indeed flesh and blood, yet behind that flesh and blood we have to do with the world-rulers of this darkness. Therefore the issue is not that we Christians should make advances in a war against the power of the devil in the world, still less against the world in general. We are not called to conquer the world; that is the very point in which we differ from others — we shall receive it as a gift hereafter. Our calling is simply to stand fast, to hold our own position — the position of standing in grace (Romans 5), in liberty (Galatians 5). We rejoice in hope of the glory of God. We stand in grace and look for glory. There we are to remain standing, and everything that seeks to remove us from that position has to do with the rudiments of the world — in general with law — and is employed by the devil, the prince of this world.
The word “adversaries” cannot etymologically be explained as “those who stand upon something”; it is so called because it sets itself against that which stands. That is how Scripture describes the general attitude of the world toward believers. Believers are appointed to stand; we are, after all, raised up together with Christ. All hostility to that standing is called “adversity”, and those who exercise it are adversaries. That is how it stands in Philippians 1:28. We find a parallel also in Hebrews 12, where

believers are spoken of as running the race with patience, fixing their eyes upon Christ:

> Hebrews 12:3–4
> 3 For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.
> 4 Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

The sin of the sinners in verse 3 is precisely contradiction — speaking against. Those who withstand are those who contradict. Elsewhere they are also called “gainsayers” (Titus 1:9). The children of God are called unto sonship and are being trained as sons. Yet sonship may be lost. Hence arises the doctrine of the falling away of the saints. Men rightly find passages in Scripture which say that believers may lose salvation; only that salvation is not the childhood of God but the sonship. Works may be burned, yet the person himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire. If these two distinct things are not kept apart, great confusion arises at once, and doubt remains whether we are children of God at all and shall come to heaven — for then one can never be sure. Therefore we must keep them separate: the work Christ did in the past for the world in general, and the work He now does for believers in particular.

When such adversity exists, when the fight is on, we always ask what we have done wrong that we, as children of God, have it so hard. Yet here it stands written that the presence of adversaries is to them a token of perdition, but to you of salvation. It is not necessarily a proof that something is fundamentally amiss if we meet with opposition. That does not mean that whenever we encounter opposition we are automatically in the right place — that remains to be seen. But the converse is true: if we are standing in the right place as believers, we shall come into the fight, and for us personally that is a confirmation. It is only part of the story, yet it is true. If we stand fast and there is no fight, it is almost certain we are in the wrong place. By definition we run counter to the world, to the devil, to the adversaries. The great example of this follows in chapter 2 — the example of the Lord Jesus Himself, who is also set forth as pattern in Hebrews 12. If our life just glides along smoothly, it is almost certain that something is lacking in our spiritual life in one way or another. By definition opposition must come. Wherever the Word of God appears and the work of Christ is done, men encounter the adversary. It may, of course, be that we have become so accustomed to the fight that it no longer means anything to us — that we regard it as so normal that we scarcely feel it as conflict any more. That is very personal and hard to measure objectively. Yet the Word of God will always be contradicted. Therefore James says, “Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.” Or Romans 5:

> Romans 5:2–5
> 2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.
> 3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;
> 4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope:
> 5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed

abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.The hope of the glory of God is reached by way of the patience and tribulations of verse 3. It concerns our future expectation, but that expectation is bound up with those tribulations. For they lead to the hope of glory. That is the very subject of Philippians 1 also. When such adversity is present, it is to us of salvation.

Philippians 1:29–30

29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;
30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.Paul here sets himself forward as an example, after which in chapter 2 the Lord Jesus Himself is presented as pattern, followed by the conflict and patience of Timothy and Epaphroditus. Then in chapter 3 he returns to the subject, where the heading in many Bibles is “warning against false teachers”, yet in reality the warning already began in chapter 1:27. Between these passages we find the conflict into which we are to enter — not for the suffering’s sake, but for the glory which is its consequence, and moreover for that which is in our heart. We cannot do otherwise. The love of Christ constraineth us. We choose it.
The word “suffer” or suffering as a kind of torture. That is not really the meaning of the word. It may be included, but it is not the primary sense, either of “suffer” or of “patience” is passion — hence we speak of the Passion of the Lord Jesus, meaning His suffering. Yet passion has a far wider meaning. The word is also connected with being passive (as an adjective). It has the same sense as “patient” or “enduring”. We use it in the expression “patiently looking on” which means looking on passively — no torture is involved; one simply does nothing. A passive person is one who does nothing. Yet a person who is passionate — the very same word — ordinarily does a great deal, even with whole-hearted devotion. There is the key to the matter. Patience, passion, suffering do not mean being tortured; they mean undergoing something. That is the right word — undergoing. It may be a negative experience or a positive one, just as life itself may be miserable or joyful. The idea behind the word is that in both cases — whether passive or passionate — one to some degree loses control and certainly the initiative. One does it automatically. Music and art in general can be such a passion. When it is said that an artist must suffer, the meaning is that he must be in trouble in order to produce the finest things. That is undoubtedly true, but only because there is no real difference between the two ideas. To be patient or to be passionate means that something comes over a person. The phenomenon appears in its extremes, and there we often find the devil as well. What occult mediums do is also a form of passivity, often followed by passionate behaviour in which they do and say the strangest things without having the slightest idea what they are about. When it is a matter of character description, it is patience that is required. That is the willingness to let go of the helm.

Philippians 2

In chapter 2 also the subject is walking worthily of the gospel of Christ and what belongs to it. As believers we have personal responsibility with regard to the practice of our lives. The remarkable thing is that the Lord Jesus Himself is set forth as pattern, with reference back to the days of His flesh.

Philippians 2:1–2
1 If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,
2 Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.
That was the subject in Ephesians also — the unity of believers, not only fundamentally (that we are joined together as members of the body of Christ), but especially in practice: first in our whole attitude of life, and then also in our practical walk, which is the theme of the rest of this epistle to the Philippians.
The word “consolation” here (Greek paraklēsis) expresses unity. In Scripture consolation or comfort is always the designation of the New Covenant, in which unity exists. Parakaleō means “to call alongside”, “to be called to one another’s side”. It is the expression of the unity of believers in general and especially of our union with Christ, who is Himself called the Paraklētos — the Comforter. We have reserved that term for the Holy Spirit, and to preserve the distinction it is often translated “Advocate” (1 John 2). He is our Comforter, the Comforter of Israel — a Messianic title even in Judaism — and the thought is that He pleads our cause, cares for us, watches over us. In general we as believers have the responsibility to watch over one another, so that consolation is one of the characteristic concepts of life under the New Covenant. That this is so, and that we should watch over and care for one another, is expressly stated in verse 4.The consolation in Christ is a variation upon fellowship with Christ. Then follows another: “if any comfort of love”. Love also is the expression of unity and fellowship. This word “comfort”, however, is a different word. The translators have marked the difference by rendering the first “consolation” and the second “comfort”. In English they remain the same, but this second word really means conversation, mutual speech. We often use “comfort” in that sense also: when we comfort someone we usually speak with or to someone. The concepts overlap somewhat, but the underlying thought is that we should be a help to others — sometimes even with words. Several synonyms are therefore used here, but the meaning remains the same. This is clear from the next phrase: “if any fellowship of the Spirit”. Fellowship is really the same as the consolation and comfort in the two preceding clauses. Here it is called “fellowship of the Spirit” because our unity is not so much outward or according to the old man, but has arisen because we have all been baptised by one Spirit into one body (1 Corinthians 12). Our connection with one another lies in the fact that we have all as believers received the same Spirit — the Spirit of Christ. We are members of one body, not because we are fastened to one another, but because we have received the same Life, the same Spirit. It is that one Spirit who works in and through us, and who is on

occasion described as the other Comforter. The Comforter in the first place is Christ Himself. That one Spirit is the life of Christ in us. It is therefore a spiritual unity, and that is what Ephesians 4 also says:

Ephesians 4:3

3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

“Unity of the Spirit” and “fellowship of the Spirit” mean exactly the same thing. Moreover, Ephesians 4 does not say that we are to endeavour to bring about this unity of the Spirit — that would be impossible. Spiritual unity in this sense we cannot produce; it has been produced. What is required of us is that we endeavour to keep it — to live it out in practice, with full awareness and all its consequences.

In this verse it is added that it is a spiritual unity in the bond of peace. That bond of peace is the covenant of peace — the New Covenant. Spiritual unity has been brought about by a covenant, for everything that makes one is called a covenant, a bond — that which joins together. It is of course that New Covenant in Christ, designated the Covenant of Grace, the Covenant of Peace, the Everlasting Covenant, the New Covenant. We are one in Christ, the Mediator of the New Covenant. He is the One who joins us to God and thereby to one another. We did not bring about that New Covenant; the Mediator of the New Covenant did. It is accomplished by Christ, and we are required to live out of it. That has consequences; it is not optional.

“Bowels and mercies” in verse 1 points to the fact that we have compassion on one another, even as the Lord has had compassion on us. “Compassion” we know from Hosea and from Isaiah as likewise a designation of the New Covenant. There the Lord announces that He will have compassion on His own: Lo-ruhamah shall become Ruhamah — she who obtained no mercy shall obtain mercy; Lo-ammi shall become Ammi — not My people shall become My people. A thoroughly biblical description of that same New Covenant.

“Bowels and mercies” reminds us of the statement about the Lord Jesus that He was moved with compassion. That means a compassion which is not imposed or obligatory, but which springs from the disposition, from the heart, from the life one possesses — and especially from the nature of that life. We therefore find the same thing said several times here to describe the working of the life of Christ in us. If that life is present in any measure, then live out of it, says the apostle Paul.

“Likeminded” in verse 2 means having the same mind — thinking the same things. A mind has to do with what one considers, what one pursues, what one is set upon. The word rendered “of one accord” is difficult here; it is not really in the text. We meet it elsewhere, but here the translators have simply inserted it, for what actually stands is not “accord” but “soul”. It is a matter of being “one-souled”. That, however, is an expression unknown in english, so the translators made it “one accord”. That is a pity, because “one accord” gives the impression that only thinking is in view. The text has “soul”, which is far more practical than mere thinking. For “soul” is not the designation of man’s thinking only, but of his doing. It concerns practical walk in life, as we have seen many times already. The thought is that we should live in the same

manner — of course proceeding from the mind, which is also mentioned, but reaching far beyond mere disposition.
Then follows “of one mind”. The word “mind” at the end of verse 2 is not the same as the “mind” at the end of chapter 1:9, where we saw that it refers to practical knowledge or discernment. Here the word really does mean thinking. The expression literally means that ye think one thing — being of one mind, or thinking one thing. Though the expressions is difficult to translate, the general sense is clear enough. It is a matter of being likeminded — the same way of thinking, the same direction — but also the same practical outworking of it. Unity not only inward but, so far as possible, outward as well. That returns in verse 4. This “mind” in the sense of thinking in verse 2 is the same as in verse 5. It is not a vague feeling and has nothing to do with intuition. It has to do with deliberations and therefore with the choices one makes.

Philippians 2:3
3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.
The expression looks back to chapter 1:15. Men do things — in themselves good things, namely preaching Christ — but they are not to do them through strife or vainglory. That evidently happened in those days, but it ought not. Strife and vainglory are really two ways of saying the same thing, for it always means doing things at the expense of others, to spite them or to exalt oneself above them — out of rivalry. The apostle says we are not to do so, but are to do things in lowliness of mind — that is, out of humility. We are not to do things in order to be able to count and to be counted better than others — a motive from which many things are done in the world. The apostle says it should be exactly the opposite. The things we do we should do in order to serve others — in lowliness of mind. That should also be in our thinking, so that we esteem the other better than ourselves. The other is probably not better than ourselves, but that is not the point. In our thinking the question who is better ought to play no part. Every other brother or sister is a child of God, the Lord’s own possession, and a member of the same body to which we belong; therefore we should serve — not even to serve one another, but to serve our Lord, for that is what lies behind it. And the Lord will reward us for it; that also is expressly stated so that there may be no misunderstanding.

Philippians 2:4
4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.“
Look” here means “to watch over, to care for”. We are certainly to look on our own things, but we are also to look on the things of others. “Looking on” is the expression that occurs also in the term “overseer” (episkopos), which has been corrupted into “bishop”. In the first place it is a title of Christ Himself — the chief Overseer, or the chief Shepherd, for it is really the same concept. The idea of “looking on” or “overseeing” applies to all believers. Thus we are to go through life as one community in the consciousness of our union with Christ and thereby with one another. It is

that thought which is repeated several times in verse 1.We are in the first place responsible for ourselves. That seems self-evident, yet it happens very often that many look upon the things of others and make themselves responsible for them precisely because they cannot bear responsibility for their own lives. They meddle with what is wrong in another because they can do nothing with what is wrong in themselves. It must be clear that where that happens, such a person can never bear responsibility for another nor care for another. He who cannot care for himself cannot care for another. Moreover we should remember that in large measure bearing responsibility is the same as being an example. Within biblical or church connection that is certainly so. Responsibility means being an example. That is what the apostle Peter says to the elders in the church: that they should be examples to the flock and not lord it over them. One can only be an example in the measure that one's own life is in order. Therefore every man must indeed first look on his own things. There are also many passages of Scripture that say so expressly. When we stand before the Lord hereafter and give account of our own lives, we shall each do so for his own life, not interchangeably. Every one of us shall give account of himself (Romans 14:12). The same is said in Corinthians and Galatians. We may if necessary bear care for others, but we are not made responsible for them. Every man shall bear his own burden first of all, and when he does that he will probably be able also to bear something of another's. We are to work with our hands that we may have to give to him that needeth (Ephesians 4:28). In the first place we are to be responsible and care for ourselves; otherwise we are in no state to help.

Philippians 2:5

5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

We are to think and reason exactly as Christ Jesus did, and therefore to walk accordingly.

In His earthly walk the Lord Jesus was first of all responsible for Himself. The Lord knew very well what He was about. He did not ask this of others but simply went His way without its being further discussed. When questions were put to Him or remarks made about His doings, He was very decisive in His answers.

"Christ Jesus" is what He now is: Messiah Jesus. His Messiahship He received at His resurrection. Therefore the New Covenant begins with the rebirth of the Lord Jesus.

"That which was also in Christ Jesus" is shown also by what follows. There are other passages where the present mind of Christ is set before us as pattern, and where it is said that He now, in the present tense, gave Himself for the church and now bears or forbears our weaknesses (among others Romans 14, Romans 15, Ephesians 5). This thought is not generally known and is easily explained away, yet it stands written that He gave Himself for us — speaking of the present position and work of Christ. But here it is the Lord Jesus during His walk upon earth. The mind that belonged to that walk — the disposition, the way of thinking — is here held before us. Yet nothing has changed in that disposition and mind of the Lord Jesus; they are the same today. The Lord said, "Come unto me, all

ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest… Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart… Take my yoke upon you… for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11). When we are His followers therein we shall bear a yoke, but it will be easy and light for the simple reason that it is not imposed from without. It is a responsibility that springs from our heart, our mind, our very being — from the renewing of our mind, from our being conformed to the image of God’s Son.
The Lord Jesus is set before us as a practical truth for our walk in life. The apostle returns to this a page further on when he says that we are not merely to know Christ (Philippians 3:10) but to gain Christ (Philippians 3:8). That is a variation upon knowing: it means not only that we know who He is, but that we ourselves have part in Him. We are after all His possession, but He is also ours. “I am His and He is mine,” as in a hymn.

Philippians 2:6–11
6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:
7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:
8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.
9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:
10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;
11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

God laid aside His Godhead

Paul is using Christ as the pattern of humility for believers (Phil 2:3–5). It involves His
1. Descent / humiliation – vv. 6–8
2. Ascent / exaltation – vv. 9–11

So the question is: from what height did He descend, and in what way?

2. “Being in the form of God” (v. 6)
“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God” (KJV)
Key words:
- “being” – present participle in Greek (hyparchōn): existing as, really being.
- “form of God” (morphē theou) – not a mere outward shell, but the real expression of God’s nature.
  Compare v. 7 – “form of a servant.” In both cases “form” points to what truly characterizes the person.

Paul then adds:
- “equal with God” – the phrase makes it explicit: He truly shares God’s status.

So before the humiliation, the One we’re talking about is:
Truly and fully divine, sharing God’s status and glory.
That’s the starting point.

What does “emptied himself” mean? (v. 7)
“But made himself of no reputation [literally: emptied himself], and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men”
The key verb is ekenōsen – “emptied” or “poured out.”
Notice how Paul explains that emptying, grammatically:
- He emptied himself
  by
  - taking the form of a servant
  - being made in the likeness of men

In other words, the “emptying” is not described as subtracting deity, but as adding humanity and servanthood.
If you turn that into a kind of equation, the verses imply
He was in the form of God
He did not seize His rights
He emptied himself – by taking the form of a servant, being made man.
The humiliation is:
- From “form of God / equality with God”
- To “form of a servant / likeness of men”

Continue

“He laid aside His Godhead … the man Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the man Jesus of Nazareth. I do not see, in the Lord Jesus living upon earth, God in a human disguise.”
But in Philippians 2 the text never says:

- He ceased to be “in the form of God”,
- or that He was no longer equal with God.

Instead Paul says: the One who is in the form of God takes the form of a servant. The humiliation is not ceasing to be God, but choosing not to cling to the privileges of God, and instead embracing the status of a slave and a mortal man.
Think of it like a king who remains king in his person, but lays aside his royal rights and outward glory, puts on a servant’s clothes, and lives like a commoner. He has truly humbled himself—not by ceasing to be the king, but by not using what is rightfully His.

4. The depth of the humiliation (v. 8)
“And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”
The descent goes in stages:

1. Being in the form of God
2. Taking the form of a servant (true humanity, true servanthood)
3. Obedience unto death
4. Even the death of the cross (the most shameful execution in that culture)

So Christ’s humiliation includes:

- Becoming man (with all the weakness and suffering that entails)
- Living as a servant under the will of the Father
- Submitting to a criminal’s death, cursed and rejected

This is real humiliation, but the text still never says:
“He stopped being God.”
It says:
As true God, He went all the way down into true human lowliness and death.
The paradox Christians have always confessed is:
The One hanging on the cross is truly human and truly the eternal Son –
He dies according to His human nature, but it is still the Person who is God the Son who undergoes death in that way.

Continue

His exaltation and the "Name above every name" (vv. 9–11)

"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name…"
Because of His obedient humiliation:

- God highly exalts Him
- Gives Him "the Name above every name"

In the Old Testament, the name above every name is the divine Name.
Paul says:
at the name of Jesus every knee bows,
every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord.
"Lord" (Kyrios) here is more than "sir" – it's the same word used in the Greek OT for Jehovah. Paul is deliberately echoing Isaiah 45:23, where every knee bows to JehovahH and every tongue confesses Him.
So:

- The One who did not cling to His equality with God,
- who took the lowest place,
- is now publicly acknowledged as Lord – as the One bearing God's own divine Name and authority.

That doesn't mean He only became divine after His exaltation. It means:
The One who was already equal with God
is now publicly installed and proclaimed in that place as the crucified, risen man.
His divinity is not created in the resurrection, but vindicated and manifested.

6. So what exactly is Christ's humiliation "from being God"?
From Philippians 2:6–8, we can summarize it like this:

1. He truly is God
    - "in the form of God"
    - "equal with God"
2. He did not cling to His rights
    - He did not treat divine status as something to be exploited for Himself.
3. He "emptied Himself" by addition, not subtraction
    - Not by ceasing to be God,
    - but by taking the form of a servant and being made in the likeness of men.
4. He went to the lowest possible point
    - Obedient human life,
    - Suffering,
    - Death,
    - Death by crucifixion.

So the humiliation is:
From the highest glory and status
to the lowest shame and suffering
without ever ceasing to be who He is in His divine being.
That's precisely why His humiliation is so astonishing:
it is God the Son who chooses to live as a servant and to die as a criminal.
If you say He stopped being God, you actually lessen the humiliation:

- A mere creature dying on a cross is tragic.
- The eternal Son, who is in the form of God, taking flesh and dying on a cross – that is infinite condescension.

Continue

What are we meant to take from this?

Paul's point in context (Phil 2:1–5):

- Don't seek your own advantage.
- Don't cling to status, rights, or honor.
- Look to the interests of others.

And then he says:

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (2:5)
The "mind" of Christ is:

- Having all rights, yet not insisting on them.
- Being infinitely rich, yet becoming poor for others.
- Accepting the path of obedience, suffering, and service, trusting the Father to exalt in His time.

So the humiliation of Christ "from being God" in Philippians 2 is:
The eternal Son, truly equal with God,
willingly taking the lowest place as a real man and servant,
going all the way to a shameful death,
and in that way revealing the true heart of God's love and humility.

There is quite a lot of debate about this passage in chapter 2. I am of the opinion that what is written here is, in itself, so terribly clear that there is really no room for discussion at all. Yet thick books are written about it. The result is that the very words that stand here are themselves emptied out, or rather destroyed. What is written here is in fact usually completely reasoned away. We ought simply to read what is written here, and it will turn out that, in general, what is said in these verses is entirely clear.

In this passage it is said that He who was God became man. In verse 8 it says that He who was God, or the form of God, or the image of God, or He who was equal with God, laid that aside, put it off, emptied Himself of it, and became man. It is a humiliation that God became man. That humiliation continues right to the end, for He humbled Himself unto the death of the cross. He became man until death followed, and that is the most shameful and disgraceful death that exists according to the Bible. Here the uttermost humiliation of our Saviour, of Christ Jesus, is described. What is there really to take away from this? And yet it is done. People say: He was God, but despite the fact that He took on a human form, He remained God. Then a problem arises, because one would then prefer to say that when He died, He also remained God. But that is difficult, for then you must say that God died, and that is by definition impossible. So it comes down to this: that the Lord Jesus remained God all that time, right up to just before His death – and then opinions differ as to when He laid aside His Godhead. Otherwise He could not have died. Since people wish

Him to retain it as long as possible, they choose the latest possible moment at which He would then have laid aside His Godhead.
The latest possible moment would then be the point at which He said, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” That is obvious. If such a word is spoken, it must surely in any case imply that He Himself, at that point in time, was not God. Others say it must have been earlier. If the Lord Jesus suffered as He did, as it is written of Him in the garden of Gethsemane—if one lets sink in what Scripture says about that—it is hard to see Him at that time as the Godhead. Perhaps He had already laid aside His Godhead on that occasion.
Then there is another highly disputed variant, namely that He did this at the time of His baptism. But that is rather difficult, because precisely on that occasion there is, if anything, a pointing to His Godhead, when it says:

> “And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:17)

The Spirit descended upon Him on that occasion, and one would actually expect that then, on that occasion, it would depart from Him. So that becomes rather problematic. Some realise that the Lord, in His earthly ministry, stood in such a relationship with God as such, in heaven, that you can hardly say that He Himself was God at that time. After all, we have only one God; it becomes a bit complicated.
It all becomes very laborious, whereas – so it seems to me – there is nothing difficult about it. You do not need a degree in theology, you only need to have read your Bible. Then it is self-evident to conclude that Scripture teaches that the Lord Jesus was man and became man. When God became man, He laid aside His Godhead.
One variant that we know best is this: the Lord Jesus became man at His birth in Bethlehem. He did indeed lay aside His Godhead, but still had it with Him, so that people nevertheless continue to say that Jesus of Nazareth, living on earth, was God in the midst of mankind and in the form of a man. He laid aside His Godhead, but nevertheless had, in principle, the possibility at any moment to lay hold of His Godhead, if He so wished. But He did not do so. It was therefore a voluntary humiliation in which He lived, but at any moment, on the basis of the rights that He had, He could have disposed of His Godhead. Then follows, in the temptation in the wilderness—what, after the birth of the Lord Jesus, is the first thing that is described about the Man—that the devil sought to bring Him to make use of His Godhead, whereas that was not at all the intention from God’s side. And He did not do it.
Suppose this were so: God became man, laid aside His Godhead, but would, as the man Jesus of Nazareth, be able at any moment, if He so wished, to avail Himself of His Godhead. Those who teach, or have taught, this say that He nonetheless was and always remained God. If I were to accept that same theory as true, I would say that therefore He was not God. There we shall not reach agreement. We both believe the same thing, namely that God became man in the person of the Lord Jesus, laid His Godhead aside and did not make use of it temporarily. People then say that He remained God, because He could always have made use of it; but

I am of the opinion that this is pure theory. In practice it means that He was not God but man.
In the Bible we do not find such a complicated theory. Moreover, it cannot be maintained, because precisely those who teach this still insist that He was indeed God. When you ask on what grounds He was then God, people say: but He did miracles. Then they are in principle saying that He made use of His Godhead. That is in conflict with what had been agreed, namely that He had laid aside His Godhead. Then He was simply God, and made use of it.
Besides, how many people in the Bible did miracles? The Man, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of man, did miracles in the power of God, in the power of His Father in heaven. He says so Himself. That is no proof of His Godhead. Then someone says: He forgave sins, and that was held against Him. No one can forgive sins but God alone. But that is not so. We have all made it our habit to forgive sins, have we not? We hope that others also forgive our trespasses, and that God forgives our trespasses, “as we forgive our debtors”. It is ordinary men who forgive sins. The Man, Jesus of Nazareth, could forgive sins. He said: “Hath no man condemned thee? … Neither do I condemn thee.” And with full right. But that is no proof of His Godhead.
In the Bible we read in plain language that He became man and laid aside His Godhead: that the man Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the man Jesus of Nazareth. I do not see, in the Lord Jesus living upon earth, God in a human disguise. For that He was not. When, around Christmas, we ask ourselves why He became man – then no one stumbles over the expression – we read in Hebrews 2 two reasons. The first is that He became man in order that He “should taste death for every man” by the grace of God. He became man in order to be able to die.
Was the Lord Jesus mortal? The answer is yes. The proof is that He died. When did He then become mortal? When He became man. God is, by definition, immortal; otherwise He cannot be God. Did the Lord Jesus ever lay aside His Godhead? The answer is yes. The next question is: when? When He became man in order to be able to die. The next question then is: why had He to die? There are two answers.
The first is because He, as man, and in particular as the Son of man, as the official, lawful, direct and first heir of Adam, as head of the whole human family, according to God’s law—or the Mosaic law—had the right to make Himself accountable for the whole of mankind and therefore especially for the guilt of sin of mankind. That is the right of redemption. The Lord Jesus was, as heir in the line of Adam (Matthew 1), the Head of the whole of mankind. That would have given Him the right to the throne, but that He must first secure for Himself, and that He will indeed do. As Head of the human family He had the right to bear the sin, the burden, the guilt of all mankind. And the result was His death, for all.
It happens more often that one man makes Himself surety for a whole people. Moses is the first example of that. It could not be otherwise, for at that time the people had only just come into existence. Moses was the first appointed as head of the people, not on the basis of direct right of inheritance, but certainly ultimately by official appointment. In that

position he would therefore have had the right to make himself surety for the whole people and to bear the punishment for the whole people, and he volunteers for that. Moses is thereby a type of the Lord Jesus, not only as head of Israel, but, since Israel is again a picture of the whole of mankind, the Lord Jesus is therefore Head of the whole of mankind, and He makes Himself surety for mankind.

The idea that one man bears the sins of the whole of mankind is absurd – but not if it concerns the head of the whole family. We no longer know that principle in our culture, but in many other cultures they do. The Son of man had the right to act as Redeemer for the whole of mankind, and He did so. That is why He became man. But there was more attached to it.

The second reason that is given in Hebrews 2 is that He should not only go into death, but also rise out of it again by the power of the Father. It is that power of the Father which then became His power, and it is then the power which also works in us. It is the power “which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand” (see Ephesians 1); it is that power which works in us who believe.

He was Jehovah (Psalm 8), but was, for a little while, made lower than the angels – that is, humbled – in order that He, as man, should taste death. He would undergo it for all. Through death He would “destroy him that had the power of death”, and deliver all those who, through their lifetime, were subject to bondage, to the bondage of corruption and of death – that is, us. He would die and thereby bear the punishment of sin, but He would rise from the dead, and so put an end to the dominion of death. Where one rises from the dead, death is conquered. Thenceforth we cry:

“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” (1 Corinthians 15:55)

and the apostle says:

> “But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 15:57)

“In Christ we are more than conquerors” (compare Romans 8). “What is the victory that overcometh the world?” (1 John 5) “Even our faith.”

> “And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” (1 John 5:4)

Therefore we are always of good courage. “Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world,” He said on the night in which He was betrayed. And thus also him who exercised power over the world, namely the power of the devil and thereby of death. He did that as man. He had, as man, to go that way, to fulfil a human function as man – undoubtedly the most important human function one can think of, but nonetheless a human function.

This work – Redeemer of very many, of the Son of man – was not done by God in a human disguise. He did not merely appear as man so as to fulfil a human function; it was God who laid aside His Godhead and became man, and as man on earth fulfilled a function, not in the capacity of God, nor under the Name Jehovah, for that belongs to His Godhead, but under the name Jehoshua. As man, and with the name which He received as man, He fulfilled that work. The Lord does not call Himself the Son of God; He calls Himself the Son of man. It does not matter how long beforehand He

had already been nominated to be appointed as Son; it does matter that He was officially appointed Son of God, from God's side of course, when God raised Him from the dead and said:

> "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." (Psalm 2:7; see also Acts 13:33; Hebrews 1:5 and 5:5)

It is a way that the Lord Jesus went.

The thought is that the invisible, unknowable God, who in any case has no form, when He makes Himself known, does so in a form, under the name Jehovah in the Old Testament. The name is not always mentioned, but in many cases it is. Often His name is asked, and then He bears this name Jehovah, or "LORD" as it is often translated. That is the name of the expression of the being of God. The name of God is not the name of the Godhead as such, but the name that is given to the revelation of the Godhead. The Godhead as such has no name. When God takes on a form and makes Himself known in a form or likeness comprehensible to us, He bears the name Jehovah. That Name was to be called upon, and that is therefore the highest Name there is. That is the Name that God bore in Old Testament times. When we then pass over the most difficult period and arrive in our present time, it is still so. In whatever form God expresses Himself, that form is called Jehovah. That has always been so and always will be so.

What Scripture teaches us is that, however He may look, He answers to the name of Jesus. Therefore we speak of the Lord Jesus. Isaiah says that there is under heaven no other name given whereby we must be saved than the Name of Jehovah. (He speaks there of the LORD, Jehovah.) There is but one Name, one God, and His Name is Jehovah, and we should call upon Him and be saved. "I am Jehovah, I am the LORD your Redeemer. I am the first and I am the last; and beside me there is no God, no Saviour beside me." Those are exactly the same words from Isaiah that are later used in Revelation 1 to designate the Lord Jesus: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the first and the last." Peter then says that there is under heaven no other name given whereby we must be saved. He meant the Name Jesus, just as in Revelation. Isaiah says: it is Jehovah. But if we search well in Isaiah, we find there also the name Jesus. That is why we call the Lord "Jesus". That is why we call Jesus "the Lord". Therefore Peter says on the day of Pentecost at the end of Acts 2:

> "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." (Acts 2:36)

This says that God has raised this Jesus, who was crucified and died, from the dead and has made Him Lord. That means that when God manifests Himself in a visible form or likeness, no one appears other than the man Jesus of Nazareth. When someone is made Lord, he is made the expression of the being of God. As in Old Testament times God appears at times as Jehovah, or as the Angel – namely Jehovah – so it is now the case that if God were now to appear here, the Man with the marks in His hands and His feet would be seen. And if you were then to say: "Shew us the Father", He would say:

> "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." (John 14:9)

The difficulty with the books of John is that so much is said there which, at that time, was not yet true, but was true at the time when the book was written. Whoever saw Jesus did not see the Father, but the Man Jesus of Nazareth – in the best case Jesus, the Son of man, the Son of David, and nothing more. What is set out there is prophetic, premature, reaching forward to the situation as it exists today. Where we know the Lord Jesus, we know the Father. He also said that on the same occasion. “No man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” And what is the way? “I am the way,” He also says in John 14:6. At the moment at which He said that, He was not yet that way in reality; one could not yet come to the Father, and people still lived in Old Testament times. It was only three days away, but it was not quite so far yet.

In concrete terms the Lord says: “Ye believe in me; well, if ye continue in that, ye are indeed my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (see John 8:31–32) The Lord says there that it still had to happen. In Matthew 19:28 it is put a little more simply, namely:

> “Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory …”

Biblical truth does not hang on one verse or one expression, but on what Scripture in general says about certain matters. Here in Philippians 2 it simply says that He was in the form of God. He became the form of a servant. He was equal with God, and He became like men. The arguments that people use to whittle this down do not stand up, one by one. “But He did do miracles,” people say. Yet that is no argument for the fact that someone is or is not God.

This is no mere show: God hiding Himself in a child in Bethlehem, or in a twelve-year-old boy in the temple, and then later throwing that off again. God became man and appeared on earth as a baby. That means that if God, at that same point in time, in that same night there in Bethlehem, had wished to manifest Himself, He would have appeared in that baby. That did not happen; on the contrary. If ever, at that time, anyone could have borne the Name Jehovah, if anyone could ever have reacted to the calling upon the Name Jehovah, it would have had to be that Child. But He did not respond to that; He bore another name. All the time that the Lord Jesus walked upon earth, you did not need to seek Jehovah anywhere else. But to say that He was Jehovah is not so. That was precisely what had been laid aside, and only at His resurrection does He receive back the Name above every name. Since then, moreover, the man Jesus of Nazareth is the expression of the being of God, and He is called upon by the Name Jesus or by the Name Jehovah. We name Him by both Names, though we have converted the Name Jehovah to Lord Jesus. Jehovah Jesus, Jesus Jehovah. The expression brings out that Jehovah, who was known as the God of Israel, is nonetheless the God of hosts, Jehovah Sabaoth. If He were now to appear, we should see Jesus of Nazareth.

In the time that the Lord Jesus was on earth from His birth, there was no manifestation of the Godhead. When God manifests Himself, as a demonstration in a small, private circle, that is on the mount. There the Lord Jesus appears in a glorified form. There Jehovah appears, the

revelation of the Godhead. For a moment God expresses His Being in the Lord Jesus as a demonstration — not primarily to us or to the bystanders, for there were hardly any, but to the man Jesus Himself, so that the Man, in His weakness – not compared with you and me, but with God as such – might be strengthened by such things. That occurs a few times more. Beside the Lord Jesus the Father or Jehovah never appears. There is but one Jehovah, and that is the Lord Jesus.

Therefore I conclude that when the angels appeared in Bethlehem above the fields of Ephratah, to the shepherds, that this must have been just before the birth of the Child. Afterwards the angels disappeared. That is also expressly mentioned. That must then have been the very earliest moment of the birth of the Child. It does not say so in so many words, for the scenes are told one after another: first the scene of the birth, then the scene of the shepherds, and then again the scene of the birth. These things therefore run more or less together. But the point of synchronisation is, in the one case, that Jehovah appears above the region. That this then disappears is clear enough. Jehovah, the angel of the LORD, makes way for, or is exchanged with, that Child there in the manger at the point of His birth.

If He had not truly laid aside His Godhead, how could He then be filled with all the fulness of God? And if He had always had the Name above every name, how could He then have received a Name which is above every name? If He had always been as high as can be, how could He then be “highly exalted”? If He had always had the highest Name that exists, how could He then have “obtained a more excellent name than they”? (Hebrews 1:4) Usually we read over such words quickly, without asking ourselves anything, and apply them to who Christ is now. That is correct, but we ought also to ask how it came about.

The way to that exceeding exaltation or glorification, to that Name above every name, to the very highest throne, runs via the utmost humiliation, via obedience and via servanthood.

One of the most important themes in connection with the person of the Lord Jesus, which is in fact hardly ever mentioned, is the theme of the faith of Jesus Christ. It has even been translated out of the Bible. We still just find it in the Authorised Version, but in more modern translations the expression is completely unknown: the faith of Jesus Christ, and parallel with it the obedience of Jesus Christ. What did He then believe in? To whom was He obedient? To God? Well, if He Himself were that God, what would it mean? The very essence is that Jesus of Nazareth, the man, lived on earth in full submission to God, to the will of God, to the plan of God, and thus in service and lowliness. This Man, as the first Man, has reached the final goal. Those are the words from Hebrews – and especially Hebrews 12 – in which He is called “the author and finisher of our faith”. Him we should consider; we should be His followers.

All that He had, He gave up. He had lost it when He was born as Jesus of Nazareth. What He received at His birth, He lost as well, for He died. That is what Scripture teaches us concerning the Lord Jesus: about a Man who, in full obedience to God, went His way, and thus became the revelation of

the being of God, was highly exalted, and received the Name above every name.

> Hebrews 12:2
> “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

The expression simply means that He is the First who has finished the race of faith. Not in the sense that He was the first who ran that race, for that was not so, but He is the First who has actually reached the final goal. That was the crown, the laurel wreath.

When we speak about the humanity of the Lord Jesus, the question arises: was He also a sinner? That in itself has little to do with it, because someone who is a man does not necessarily have to be a sinner. If it is so, it has to do with the way we understand the concept “sinner”. Scripture says that the Lord Jesus came on earth “in the likeness of sinful flesh.” (Romans 8:3) Was He then God? That is not the conclusion you can draw from this. Was He then also a sinner?

The concept “sinner” can be applied on two different levels. The legal level, and the biological – physical – level, that is, being a sinner because of a sinful nature. They are more or less two different things. To the best of my knowledge I have never read anything explicitly in the Bible about a sinful nature of the Lord Jesus. Except for this statement in Romans 8:3. Yet from that expression we cannot conclude that He had a sinful nature. Nor that He did not have a sinful nature. We simply do not read anything about it.

There is another statement in the Bible, in Psalm 51: where David spoke, but of which Peter later says that he was speaking about the Lord Jesus: “in sin did my mother conceive me.” There, where people do not deny that this is a statement from the mouth of the Lord Jesus, I have heard it explained that this means that the mother was the sinner and not the child. If you wish to get rid of the sin of the Lord Jesus, you must do it that way. Yet you do not get rid of it, because the same person also speaks at length about the sin for which he is responsible. If you reason it away in the one sentence, it does not help you, for in the others it still appears many times. The same One who is speaking there says to God in heaven (verse 6; verse 4): “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned.” Words of David, put into the mouth of the Lord Jesus.

He became Man with the purpose of bearing the guilt of sin of mankind. To that end He very precisely chose His mother Himself. Therefore He was born in the line of the heirs of Adam, in order that He, as Head of the human family, as Son of man, should be able to take upon Himself the guilt of mankind as such. For that purpose He was born. For that purpose He was conceived in sin, not necessarily because He had a sinful nature. Since He was born as Son of man, He was that in order that He might bear the guilt of all mankind. Thus from His birth He was, on God’s side, not reckoned as having a sinful nature, but He was reckoned as a sinner. The other no longer matters. He bore the sin of the world. Is He then a sinner or not? Does He then stand guilty before God or not? If someone takes

upon himself the guilt of all mankind or of all the world, does he then have guilt or not?
He was also the only Man who could say: “Against thee only have I sinned.” We know that David’s sin was not only against God. He had also sinned against a few others. The Lord Jesus, who bore the guilt of mankind as such, did not stand guilty before any man whatsoever, but only before God.
Scripture makes very much of His obedience, His faithfulness, His faith and His submission. A race of faith which He ran, and of which we ought to take an example. The statement, “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin,” was fulfilled at the birth of the Lord Jesus in Bethlehem. To be honest, I think it was somewhat earlier. It has to do with the fact that Scripture teaches that the Lord Jesus Himself was of the opinion that He had lost, or had begun to lose, His glory at the first day of Genesis 1. At the beginning of the prayer with which He closed His earthly ministry, in the night in which He was betrayed, He said: “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.” He did not say then: before I became Man, but “before the world was.”
The thought is that the dishonour which is now bound up with a sinful world was already borne by Him from the time that this sinful world came into being. There a significant part of His glory was lost, at any rate. Therewith I do not immediately intend to say that He then already bore the guilt of the world, but I do intend to say that before those seven days in Genesis 1 He had determined to take that guilt upon Himself. However, for that He first had to become Man. That was the condition for the coming into being of this world. All that is connected with it.
There is no doubt that this truth is simply clearly stated in the Bible. If you say: I do not believe that He had a sinful nature, I say: neither do I. There is nothing about it in the Bible and I would not know why it should be so. If it is so, it makes no difference to me. Someone once said: if He Himself were a sinner by nature, He could not bear our sins. But why not? Where does it say that in the Bible? Why should I not be able to pay another person’s debt while I myself also have a debt?
When people say that the Lord Jesus had a sinful nature, or did not have a sinful nature, they base that on the statement in Hebrews 4:15, where it says that He “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” They then take only the expression “without sin” and interpret it apart from the context as: He had no sinful nature. Our normal question would be: Did the temptation have any result? Did He come to sin? The answer is: no. He was in all things tempted like as we are, yet thereby did not come to sin. That is the normal meaning.
If we came across any other verse in that same Epistle to the Hebrews and the word “sin” stood there, we would, without hesitation, conclude that this word explicitly means “unbelief”. Why then not in that one verse? The temptation was aimed at the Lord Jesus being unfaithful to the Word of God. What He always answers the tempter is: “It is written.” That is a demonstration of His faithfulness to the Word and thus of His faith. In Hebrews 4:17, 18 and 19 (he clearly alludes to the passage about Israel) it

is already explained what is to be understood here. It says of Israel that they could not enter into Canaan because of their sin, disobedience and unbelief. Three words in succession. Sin is unbelief. Even Adam's sin was unbelief. That is what is set forth about the Lord Jesus, especially in the context of Hebrews, namely His faith or His obedience.
Did the Lord Jesus then commit sins? That is not stated in Scripture. I do not think it matters. What it is about is the legal matter, whereby this Man appeared in the world with the deliberate purpose of bearing the guilt of all mankind and all the world. Whatever He did, or did not do, He stood guilty before God. That was your and my guilt. Nevertheless, He was a uniquely chosen instrument of God, as Man, to accomplish the work of God. That has nothing to do with whether He was or was not a sinner. It has everything to do with whether He was a believer or not. "For whatsoever is not of faith is sin."
As regards our own personal situation: we ought to be followers of Him, of the Lord Jesus. Whether we are sinners, great or small, makes no difference. Faith does. Insofar as the Lord gives us gifts, He does not give them because we are decent people, or because we have sinned much or little, but "according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." (Romans 12) Whether we are sinners or not, through the Lord Jesus Christ we may with boldness place our lives and bodies, sinful or not, at God's disposal.
Where we are frustrated by sin, by our shortcomings, we ask ourselves whether the Lord Jesus was a sinner or not. Since He is an example for us, He had better not be, so runs the reasoning. But we do not read that in the Bible. Personally, I would much prefer to line up with the most common views within evangelical Christianity, because that would be much easier for me. But it must have Biblical foundation, and I do not find it in the Bible, and there it ends. What I read is that the Lord, from God's side, was regarded as Man and, in particular, as a sinner. But also as a believer. As a sinner He had to die, but on the ground of faith He was accounted righteous and thus immediately raised again from the dead, as Firstfruits, as Man and as Head of the new humanity.
When God reveals Himself, expresses Himself and answers to His Name being called upon, then the Head of the new humanity appears, who is the expression of the Being of God, who is the Man after God's image and likeness, who is the brightness of God's glory and therefore bears the name Jehovah. He is the only human representative of God on earth. Indeed, He is the expression of the Being of God. Apart from any theology, He is the Person of God. That is what He was to be, and that is what He became at His resurrection from the dead. I say this with the firm conviction that with this thought you will not encounter any problem at all with any Bible text.
At the moment that He would be God on earth, how then can He call upon God in heaven? How can He say that He does not do His own will, but the will of His Father, if He is God? Whose will is He then doing? His own will, surely? Those are all arguments you can see through at once, that cannot stand. We ought to know Him, and also "the power of his resurrection." (Philippians 3:10) That power means nothing if He always was God

already, in whatever form. The thought is precisely that He was Man, like us, “in the likeness of sinful flesh”; He has likewise taken part of flesh and blood, just as the brethren. God has raised Him from the dead, and that is our hope. We trust that, just as the Lord Jesus, the Man, a sinner according to the law, according to God’s standards, on the ground of His faith has received eternal life and thus has overcome death, so we, sinners according to the law, on the ground of our faith, shall be raised from the dead just like the Lord Jesus, having victory over death, receiving eternal life.
Obedience is expected of every man. Man is expected to take a subordinate position with respect to God, and that applies also to the Man Jesus of Nazareth. Moreover, man is expected in the first place to believe God on His Word. Scripture also teaches this at length concerning the Lord Jesus: His faith, His obedience, His service, His submission. It was God’s will that this Man should make use of the position which He had, and so should pay the debt of mankind as such. That is also what has happened. Therefore God has highly exalted Him; that is the sequel to it.
The expression “to think it robbery” has always given rise to discussion, because people do not understand the expression and think to solve it by inserting a suitable expression in the translation which we then do not immediately stumble over. Yet it is really no great problem. As it stands now, one reads only:

Philippians 2:6
“Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:”
This is in fact an incomprehensible expression, for if He was “in the form of God” and thus gave expression to the Being of God, it is a strange expression that He “thought it not robbery to be equal with God.” It says: “He was in the form of God.” He was namely equal with God. “Equal” does not mean equal for a short time, but flatly, on a level, equal. He equalled God. He was of the same level. He was God, or, He was the form of God. He was the expression of God’s Being, the brightness of God’s glory, the express image of His person. In Hebrews 1 these terms are applied to Christ now, since His resurrection. Very precisely, because it says so there. Here it is said that the Lord Jesus Christ was from heaven. There, as Jehovah, He gave expression to the Being of God. He was the face of God. He was the surface, the outside of God. He was the embodiment of the Godhead, the Person of God. All these terms mean exactly the same. In the Bible the “person” is the outside, not the inside. God the Father is therefore not a person. That is a linguistic matter. He was the form of God, and when He appears as such, He bears the Name Jehovah. He is the Same as the Lord Jesus Christ, who now is called Jehovah. Not when He was on earth, but since His resurrection.
“God was manifest in the flesh” gives the wrong impression. That is not what stands there in Timothy. Men have inserted the word “God”. It is not about God manifest in the flesh, but about “the mystery” manifest in the flesh. That is Christ. “God was manifest in the flesh” (as a doctrinal slogan) does not occur in the Bible. Insofar as it exists, we find it in the

resurrection of the Lord Jesus. There God expresses Himself in flesh, in the risen Christ. He is “the image of the invisible God,” but not when He lived on earth. The same people who say that the Lord Jesus on earth is the expression of the Being of God also say that when He was on earth He had “no form nor comeliness.” That is inconsistent.
If we say that He is “the brightness of [God’s] glory”, the question must always be: When? He is that now, and He was that in Old Testament times, but then He was not Jesus. Nor yet the Christ or the Son. He has not always borne the name Jesus. He received that at His becoming Man, at His birth. The title Christ He only received when He was actually anointed at His resurrection from the dead.
As regards the Sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ, we can say that “Son of God” is not the designation of His Being. Sonship is a function. 1 Corinthians 15 speaks of the disappearance of the Son, the ceasing of the Sonship. Is He then not the eternal Son? Nevertheless it says that He will reign as King “till” the last enemy shall be destroyed. That is after the Last Day. Then the Son shall deliver up the Kingdom to the Father, “that God may be all in all.” Where has the Son gone? Where the Father? The relationship of Father and Son is a temporary matter. The Son has fulfilled His Sonship. His function of Sonship has attained the intended result, and therefore there is no more mention there of “Son”. But because there will also be no other son after Him, He is nevertheless the eternal Son. He is definitively the Son. If we use the word “definitive”, we are free of the problem of time. The same applies to the function of High Priest after the order of Melchisedec. To that work too there will one day come an end. Nevertheless He will always remain the High Priest. There will be no other after Him.
Scripture teaches that the work of the Son has begun once. Indeed, that He once, on a certain day, has been made Son. How long beforehand He had already been nominated thereto, and thus could be designated as Son or Firstborn, does nothing to alter this. He was only actually set as such at His resurrection from the dead.
In the Old Testament the appearing of the Son of God is announced. The Jews, who are not burdened with the doctrine of a triune God, but on the contrary have as their confession of faith that the LORD is One – that at least does stand in the Bible – know very well that “Son of God” in its highest sense is a designation of the Messiah. They do not regard Sonship as the designation of someone’s Being and therefore they do not agree with the idea of the third Person of the Godhead. That terminology is not Biblical. There are still five more applications of the term “son of God”. The devil is that. Man is by nature a son of God, and Adam in particular. Angels are sons of God, and all Israel is called son of God. All in the same Bible.
When Psalm 2 says – in the New Testament applied to the Lord Jesus Christ – “Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee,” there is in the Bible no doubt that this was on the day of His resurrection. Then He was set as such. Of which son of God is it speaking? In the first place of the Messiah (official Jewish doctrine), and then of that Son of God who is announced in 2 Samuel 7, where God says to David that “one out of his

bowels” shall receive “a kingdom” that cannot be moved. He would build a house for His Name. A son of David – cited later in Acts 2. Then God adds: “I will be his father, and he shall be my son.” According to Jewish expectation, the Messiah would indeed be Son of David, but very definitely also Son of God. Therefore Peter also answered the Lord that He was “the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

The explanation then is that He was equal with God; it belonged to Him, therefore it was not robbery. He did not steal it. That, however, presupposes that the Lord, as it were, rose up from beneath into the Godhead and so became equal with God, without this being robbery or theft. But that is a strange way of reasoning, because in general we assume that the Lord was God, always. Jehovah, the LORD, is after all from eternity the expression of the Being of God. How then did He “think it not robbery to be equal with God”? I think the sentence is broken off too soon, and that it should read:

Who thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but
made himself of no reputation, or destroyed (emptied) himself.

The point then is that the expression “to think it robbery” does not apply to “being equal with God” but to “made himself of no reputation” (destroyed Himself). He did not consider it robbery, though He was equal with God, nevertheless to destroy Himself. While He was equal with God, He did not think it robbery to destroy Himself. The point is namely that something certainly was taken from Him. He laid something aside, namely His Godhead. The term “destroy” (or “make of no reputation”) is really clear enough. People have tinkered with that word as well, to try and make something else out of it, but that does not change anything. The term “destroy” means to make into nothing. The same word is sometimes translated “emptied” or “made empty” to indicate that it was completely emptied, but in both cases it means to make empty.

The verb that stands here for “destroying” is the same word as “to become vain” (to become empty). He was God, but He emptied Himself of that. The thought concerning the Godhead and divine nature of the Lord (Jehovah) is that this divine nature dwells in Him. The outside, the appearance – that which is Jehovah – is the outside of the Godhead. The idea is that the Godhead as such is in Him. He is filled with it. Hence, when there is talk of the incarnation of the image of God, of Him who was the image of God, the incarnation of Jehovah, the idea is that, although the image appears, the Godhead no longer dwells in Him. That is “emptying”.

This side of the matter is not popular, because people do not wish to know it, but the continuation of the story seems to me well known. For that we need only turn over two pages and look at:

> Colossians 1:19
> For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;

It is about the fulness of the Father here. It concerns the Son, who has already been mentioned in verse 13 and of whom it is said in verse 15 that He is “the image of the invisible God”. One cannot see God, but He expresses Himself in a certain form; in the Old Testament that form is called Jehovah, and we now know Him as Jehovah Jesus, the Lord Jesus. He

is namely the expression of the Being of God, because all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him. That is why Jesus has received the name Jehovah; or, as Peter said: “God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.” That the name Jehovah is thereby intended appears, among other places, here in Philippians 2, where it says that He received “a name which is above every name”, but also from the words of Peter, who says that “there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12) Strictly speaking, that can only be the name Jehovah, because that is said repeatedly in Isaiah. That is the Name above every name.

Colossians 2:9

For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

This expression is nothing other than the repetition of Colossians 1:19, but here something is added which is important in that context.

Colossians 2:10

And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

That “body” in verse 9 is not the body of Jesus, nor even His resurrection body, but the Body of Christ, that is, the Church. He is our Head, and we are expected to orient ourselves toward Christ (verse 8), and what follows has to do with our connection with Christ, whose body we are reckoned to be. In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead, and thus also in His body, namely in the Church. Jehovah, the expressed image of the Being of God, has stripped Himself of that Godhead which dwelt in Him, and what remained was only an outside; and that turned out to be a human form, under the name Jesus. The Man. While He was on earth He was therefore not the expressed image of God, He did not then give form to the glory of God, for “he hath no form nor comeliness.” (Isaiah 53:2)

He who was in the form of God, that is Jehovah, emptied Himself, laid aside His Godhead. Although this may be difficult to understand, we can nevertheless believe it. He laid aside His Godhead, and later, when He was “highly exalted” (Philippians 2:9), He was filled with all the fulness of God. He surrendered the principal part of His own identity and personality. That is also why it is stated here. We, who are children of God, are also to surrender the principal part of our identity, in order that we also may be filled with the identity of Christ. We are to be made partakers of the divine nature, in large measure at the expense of our own original nature.

Ephesians 4:20–21

But ye have not so learned Christ;

If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:

In verses 17, 18 and 19 of Ephesians 4 the situation in which the natural man finds himself is first described. The purpose is that we should have learned Christ. It is very striking that He is called Christ in verse 20 and Jesus in verse 21. That is important, because it is directly connected with what is set forth here. The truth is Christ. Him we ought to know. It does not say that we should learn to know Jesus. We should learn to know Christ, and thus the power of His resurrection. Hence “Christ”. When then

it speaks of “the truth in Jesus”, we are one stage further back, with the Lord Jesus as Man. The thought is that the Lord Jesus Himself has laid aside the former walk, the “old man”. The conclusion must therefore be that the Lord Jesus has also laid aside the old man.
Some stumble over the expression because they have wrong associations with the term “old man”. You have two sorts of men: the old man and the new man. If you are an old man, you are lost; if you are a new man, you are saved. The old humanity, with Adam as head, belongs to the old world, and that passes away. The new humanity, with Christ as Head, forms part of a New Creation. The intention is that the old man be put off and the new man be put on. Here it says that the Lord Jesus has also done that. More than that, for the Lord Jesus is He who – not under the name Jesus, but under the name “Lord” – first laid aside His Godhead, became Man, and then afterwards also laid aside His humanity. The way was longer. He came from afar, from heaven, but on earth the story went further. First He laid aside His Godhead, then He laid aside the old man, and then He put on the new man, or the new man was put on Him. In Colossians 3 we also find exactly the same things: the putting off as regards the former walk. Giving things up, being lowly, being willing to serve with all the consequences involved, with the prospect of the exaltation which God has promised. An exaltation which we do not seek to realise for ourselves in this life, but quite the opposite: serving the Lord regardless of the consequences. The one real ultimate consequence is that He will exalt us. That is the example that the Lord Jesus has given us. Thus we ought not to read that “he thought it not robbery to be equal with God”, but that “He did not consider it robbery, while He was equal with God, to destroy Himself and to take upon Him the form of a servant.” That expression is the most elementary expression in the passage, in the exposition. He did not think it robbery that He precisely should be made like unto men and take upon Him the form of a servant, having to give up all His Godhead and being subsequently rejected by mankind. That is the story. He did not think it robbery, He did not fight against it, He did nothing to oppose it. On one occasion He said: “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matthew 26:53) He did not do so. It was namely the will of the Father; for that purpose He had come. He went the way He had to go. He accomplished the work which He was to do. “I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do,” He said in the night in which He was betrayed. “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.” (John 17:4–5) In short: the utmost humiliation, without His regarding that as unlawful, unjust, or as “robbery”. What is said of Him is that He became obedient unto the uttermost. Even in verse 9, where it speaks of His exaltation, it nevertheless still speaks of His humiliation.

Philippians 2:9
Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

Summary of Christ's Exaltation

Christ's exaltation is the direct result of His uttermost humiliation and obedience.
1. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him"
The exaltation is not automatic, nor based merely on His origin from heaven. It is the reward and consequence of His total self-humbling:

- He subjected Himself
- He served
- He obeyed
- He suffered
- He died the most shameful death

Therefore ("wherefore") God exalted Him.
This is the central biblical cause-and-effect:
Humiliation → Obedience → Death → Exaltation → Universal Lordship

2. "Highly exalted"
This means exalted to the highest possible position:

- Raised from the dead
- Placed at the right hand of God
- Set far above all principality, power, might, and dominion
- Given authority over heaven, earth, and underworld
- Appointed Judge of all
- Made Head over all things

This is the exaltation of a Man—the Son of Man—who is now enthroned as universal ruler.

3. "Given Him the Name above every name"
This is the climax of the exaltation.

- The Name above every name is the divine Name (LORD / Jehovah)
- What God was revealed as in the Old Testament,
  He is now revealed as in the risen Christ
- The Man Jesus is now publicly installed as:
  - Lord
  - Redeemer
  - Judge
  - Head of creation
  - Expression of God's glory

This Name is not merely a title—it is authority, dominion, and divine status expressed in the risen Christ.

Continue

4. Universal Subjection
Because of His exaltation:

- Every knee shall bow
  - In heaven (angels)
  - On earth (living humanity)
  - Under the earth (the dead and the rebellious)
- Every tongue shall confess
  - That Jesus Christ is Lord

This does not mean universal salvation.
It means universal submission and acknowledgment, including judgment.

5. “To the glory of God the Father”
The final goal is not Christ’s glory alone, but:
The full restoration and public vindication of God’s glory and righteousness.
Christ’s exaltation:

- Justifies God’s dealings with the world
- Restores what was lost through sin
- Brings creation back under righteous rule
- Reveals God perfectly in the risen Christ

Philippians 2	Humiliation of Christ (vv. 6–8)	Exaltation of Christ (vv. 9–11)
Starting position	In the form of God; equal with God	Exalted by God Himself
Inner attitude	Did not cling to His rights; emptied Himself	God highly exalted Him (supremely elevated)
Form / status	Took the form of a servant; made in the likeness of men	Given the Name above every name (Lord / Jehovah)
Path taken	Humbled Himself; became obedient	Every knee bows; every tongue confesses
Depth reached	Obedient unto death, even the death of the cross	Universal confession: Jesus Christ is Lord
Direction / movement	From highest glory → lowest shame	From lowest shame → highest glory
Final outcome	Apparent defeat, rejection, curse	Glory “to the glory of God the Father”

Note the words “also” and “highly”. It is not about “also God”, for there is no one else who has highly exalted Him. It is about “also highly”. “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him”, which implies that He had first been utterly humbled. That is also the only meaning of the expression in Ephesians where it says that He “descended into the lower parts of the earth”. That means: utterly humbled.
And for that reason God has also highly exalted Him. The “humbling” in verse 8 has there the meaning of subjecting oneself. It means to take a lower, humble position in the sense of making oneself a servant. That is also the meaning in the verse: “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God.” “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.” Service and submission, that is what it is about. He humbled Himself and became obedient. To obey means the same as to believe. It presupposes namely that one gives ear to the Word. That is, in the first place, what we call believing, but immediately joined to it is that one therefore also does what is enjoined through the Word. That is the most weighty and most familiar meaning. To obey is to do what is said. That is the last and also the lowest meaning. The first is namely that one hearkens to the Word, acts in accordance with what has been spoken. One puts one’s trust in that Word, in the promises that have been given, and lives out of them. To obey and to believe mean in the Bible to submit oneself to the Word, to trust what has been said, to live out of that and, if need be, also to do what is said.
It is with these expressions that people often have problems, because they cannot imagine the Lord Jesus as One who was obedient. They are so used to the thought that we should obey Him, that He is our Head and that we should listen to Him. God has indeed spoken through Him, and He is our Lord in the sense of our Master. That is all true, but it does not take away the fact that our Lord received this position of Lord and Master, King and High Priest, only after He, says Scripture, first Himself learned obedience, humility and faith. He knows exactly what it is to have to submit to Another — in the first place to His heavenly Father, and finally in relation to Caiaphas, Annas, Herod and Pilate. He was honest, open, and made no concessions regarding the truth. He submitted Himself and said: “Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above.” He did not fight to escape a condemnation. He suffered wrong while He submitted. Humanly speaking, it did not end well, but according to the Word of God it did. The Kingdom which He was to have He has received, and as for the throne of His father David, He shall indeed receive that in the future. The Lord Jesus believed that, and that is what He lived from.

> Hebrews 5:8
> Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;

If you believe it, the understanding will come of itself. If you do not first believe it, you will never understand it. He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. He cried in prayer unto His Father in heaven, unto His God in heaven, till the very end, “with strong crying and tears”.

He prayed unto Him that was able to save Him “from death”. Thus He learned obedience, humility, submission, service and subjection, experienced in practice, from the things which He suffered.

> Hebrews 5:9
> And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him. The glory and the authority which He has over us has its origin in His utmost service and obedience and indeed His perfect faith. The Bible says of Him that He laid aside His Godhead without any reserve, and as Man even laid aside the old man and gave His life, in order thereafter to be exalted by God. That is then the way that lies before us as believers. It is submission to the Father which is the guarantee for appointment by the Father to Sonship. That is there regarded as the reward. In the Bible “reward” is the same as “inheritance”. The thought is that one, as a child, would be faithful in service to the Father, because a child differs in nothing from a servant. After so many years a father would, as reward, appoint that child as firstborn, set him as son. Upon proven aptitude and faithfulness he receives the inheritance. That is called “the recompence of the reward”. The Lord Jesus was subject to the Father with a view to the inheritance. Therefore Hebrews 1:4 says that He “being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.” We must not fill in something else and say that He was originally Jehovah, thus He originally had a position above the angels, and since His work here on earth is finished, He has now received that position back. It does not say that. Nor does it describe why it went so. The position of the Man Jesus of Nazareth, far above the angels, is a position which He, as Child of the Father, has earned. He has qualified Himself for it and received the inheritance. It was the Father’s good pleasure. That Father is the Father of all men and angels, but it was His good pleasure that in Him all fulness should dwell. Therefore He had already said beforehand: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:17) It was the intention that He should become that. Just as in the case of Isaac it was already, before his birth, the intention that he should receive the birthright from Abraham. It did nevertheless have to happen in the prescribed way. Hence Hebrews also speaks of a race that must be run in order to receive that glory.

It may be that we do not understand how the Godhead can be laid aside, but if Scripture says it so, then it should not be so difficult to picture it. After all, every man that is born is, by Biblical definition, an earthen vessel, and that vessel ought to be filled with a content, a fulness, and that ought, if it is well, to be the Word of God. The Lord Jesus is regarded as a vessel that was first emptied. It was once full, and it was emptied. Thereafter the emptied vessel is equal to all other empty vessels. I believe that the Lord Jesus was born in Bethlehem without any knowledge, just like any other child. Afterwards He had to learn: to learn to walk and to speak, but also to learn to know Scripture. He could not quote the Law when He was three years old. He had to learn, because there was nothing there. He was an empty vessel, an earthen vessel, a vessel that in the end

was also broken. Then it is about what is in the vessel: oil, or water that is turned into wine, or “a treasure in earthen vessels”. The only difference between the Lord Jesus and mankind in general is this: He emptied Himself and then filled Himself with the Word of God. Therefore He was glorified; therefore God raised Him from the dead, and that as the first. Therefore God has “highly exalted” Him, on the ground of obedience, humility and faith.

The saying of the Lord Jesus, “I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again” (John 10:18), is often interpreted as if the Lord could simply lay down His life, fall down dead whenever He wished, and also simply get up again whenever He wished. It is often brought into connection with His crucifixion. The expression “he gave up the ghost” is then interpreted as if He consciously there laid down His spirit, that is, His life. The latter cannot be maintained, because the term “gave up the ghost” is also used in connection with quite a number of other people in the Bible. And as for the expression “I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again”: I am glad to place that alongside John 1:12.

> John 1:12
> But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

Was this in the children’s own strength? No. That answers the question: Did the Lord Jesus, in His own strength, have power to lay down His life and to take it again? I do not think so. He could not do it in His own strength; He had to call upon His Father in heaven. Perhaps He would have done that, but He could not do it in His own strength. The expression in John 1 also means that as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become the sons of God. Not in their own strength, of course, because one can never in one’s own strength become someone’s child. The same applies to the saying, “I have power to take it again.” Replace the word “power” with “right” — that is entirely legitimate — and you have no problem. He would lay it down, but He had the right, in black and white, on the ground of the Word of God, that He would receive it back again. That is what He lived from; that was His expectation for the future.

The crucifixion of the Lord Jesus is described in the Bible as humiliation, indeed as uttermost humiliation. If from this passage we turn back to John 3, we encounter the same expressions. In John 3:13 there is mention of Someone who “came down from heaven”, namely “the Son of man”. That is humiliation then. Afterwards it says:

> John 3:14–15
> And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:
> That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.

Especially in the Gospel of John there are many statements written as though they were already realised at that time, whereas we know from other Scriptures that that was not yet the case in those days. It is an anticipation of the future. That is a normal literary form. We also use that in everyday speech. We say something in the present, but it concerns the future. For example: “I’m going to such-and-such a place next week.” We

say it in the present tense, but it really ought to be: “I shall go next week …”
In order to have eternal life one must believe in the Son of man who has been lifted up, as typologically portrayed in the lifting up of the serpent in the wilderness. This statement does not refer to His crucifixion, for that was not an exaltation, but a humiliation. The lifting up of the serpent in the wilderness was a portrayal of His exaltation to the right hand of God, His utmost exaltation. The same applies also to verse 16.

> John 3:16
> “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,
> that whosoever believeth in him
> should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

That only begotten Son is the One who sits at the right hand of God. He is the exalted Son of man from verse 14, and also the exalted serpent from verse 14. It is about God who has set His Son at His right hand in heaven, in order that everyone who puts his trust in Him, the One who liveth for ever and ever, should receive in Him eternal life. Here the risen Christ is preached. If He is not raised, the preaching is empty. The preaching is not His death, but His resurrection from the dead. God has raised Him from the dead, and in Him we have received life. God has made Him “Prince of life” and Prince and Saviour. In that Name one shall be saved.

> 1 Corinthians 15:15–17
> “Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ:
> whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not.
> For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:
> And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.”

The Lord Jesus died for our sins, but we are still alive and are still in our sins if there is no life in the risen Christ. The resurrection is not merely the confirmation of it, but if that eternal life is not there, then we have not received it either, and we are still what we always were: sinful men; and we are still in our sins and stand thus before God. Our reconciliation with God rests upon the resurrection of Christ, whereby we have been raised with Him and set with Him in heaven. God has begotten us again by the resurrection of Christ.
At Philippians 2:9 reference is made to Hebrews 1:4. There that same glorification of Christ is mentioned, and it is said that He “being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.” The thought there is that the Lord Jesus has received a position above the angels, at the right hand of the Majesty on high (verse 3). Then in verse 4 it says: “being made so much better”. So He was not that before. He became better than the angels when He “obtained a more excellent name”. In the rest of that chapter passages are cited from the Old Testament in which this position of the Lord Jesus, or of the Son of man, was announced: the position that would be set above the angels and thus above all principalities and powers in the heavens.

The name above every name is Jehovah. The Lord Jesus is Jehovah Jesus. Jehovah of the Old Testament is the same as the Lord Jesus in this present time. Between them lies a history of humiliation and exaltation, but that does not take away that Jesus received the Name Jehovah. The Name Jehovah is in the Bible the expression of the Being of God in the Old Testament. In Hebrews 1:3 this is referred to. There it is said that Jesus of Nazareth is “the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person”, and His Name is Jehovah. It is that position which He also has occupied since His resurrection. That implies that He did not occupy that position before then. In Old Testament times He was not called Jesus. He received that Name when He became Man. In that period He was not called Jehovah and was not yet the expression of the Being of God. At His resurrection these two come together, and Jesus receives the Name Jehovah. He obtains a more excellent Name. Since then this Man is the expression of the Being of God. As Man He bears the Name Jesus, and as expression of God’s glory and of God’s Being He bears the Name Jehovah. In one breath we call Him “the Lord”, for that is the English equivalent of the Name Jehovah.

The only Name above every name is that of Jehovah. In Isaiah the Name Jehovah is joined to the Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, the Messiah. It is the Name of the LORD. In Acts 2 Peter says: “whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” He quotes from Joel 2. There it says in Hebrew: “whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah…”. Further on in Acts it concerns the name of Jesus: “For there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” It is a Name above every name, “far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named” (Ephesians 1:21).

The Lord Jesus prays in:

> John 17:5
> “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.”

It does not say “before I became Man”, but “before the world was”. If we conclude that the Lord Jesus laid aside glory at His birth, at His becoming Man, we must also conclude that the glory of Jehovah in the Old Testament could no longer have been as great as it originally must have been before the foundation (casting down) of the world.

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth,” but through some cause this world came under the power of sin and under the power of Satan. Thereupon there followed a judgment from God over this world, especially over the earth. It became “without form, and void; and darkness” (Genesis 1:2). Heaven and earth were judged by water. Peter says that by way of comment in 2 Peter 3:6. The thought is that when thereafter, in the seven days of Genesis 1, this judged world is to a certain extent restored (restitution), and still remains under the power of sin, that is no honourable matter for God. And so He lost glory thereby.

It could even be regarded as being in conflict with His righteousness. The righteous and glorious God takes responsibility upon Himself for the existence, or continued existence, of a sinful world. That is a fundamental line of reasoning in this connection.

He has indeed also borne that responsibility. It led ultimately to the death of the Lord Jesus. He laid aside more and more glory, including the Name, and that ended at the accursed tree. The Jews have a splendid story. They do not wish to hear about “God the Father” and “God the Son”. They know those notions well enough, but they call them differently. Because they do not want to agree with the Christians, they do not use these terms. The story then goes like this: the masculine side of God – but they mean God the Father – says: I am going to make a creation. Then came the answer from the feminine side of God – but they mean the Son, who proceeds from the Father and is therefore feminine in relation to the Father – who said: that is good, but then I will go with it. Out of that arose the expression that God went along with the creation. That feminine of God Christians are inclined to call “the Son”, but it is better to say “Jehovah”. It is the expression of God’s Being, the outside, and that is always feminine in relation to the Being itself.

Within Protestantism they tell quite another story, but it comes to the same thing. They say: Jehovah in the Bible is the covenant-God. They say it so because they have a whole theory about the covenant. They do not distinguish between different covenants; they see it all as one whole: covenant theology. That does not mean that there are several gods; that is not what they mean. What they mean to say is that when God enters into a relationship with men, which can thus be called a covenant, He does so under that Name. Then He calls Himself, or allows Himself to be called, Jehovah. But that is exactly the same as the story from Jewish sources. It means that Jehovah is He who goes with the world and thus ultimately determines the course of world history, the way to the goal set. The goal is, of course, the glorification of God. And not that only; the goal is also the justification of God. Because that is so clearly set forth in the Bible, I could also say that He did not only lose glory, but probably also righteousness. If it did not lead further than that, God would be an unrighteous God. He ought to bring judgment upon sin, but He does not. Or He has done so, but comes back on it. He judges the world, but afterwards restores it, without anything really having changed. The thought is that God does this, but that the existence of the world leads to the blaspheming of God.

The history of Israel is a pattern of all sorts of things. God’s dealings are expressed in it. In it Israel is on the one hand a picture of the whole world as such, and on another occasion a picture of the Church. The principle is that God’s dealings with Israel take place demonstratively, because they express God’s dealings with the whole world. To Israel it is said: “for your sake my name continually every day is blasphemed” (Isaiah 52:5); Paul cites it in Romans 2:24. Among the heathen over the whole world, namely. Not only the existence of Israel, but the existence of the whole world is to the dishonour of God. God lets this old fallen world exist; He has even more or less restored it in the seven days of Genesis 1, in order that He might bring forth out of an old fallen sinful world a New Creation.

If I go along with the Jewish line of thought: God as Man begets a New Creation via the woman, namely the creation. When that has happened, that old creation disappears for good. Theoretically we would say that God

ought to have judged the sinful world. He does not do so, however. Instead, He makes out of that old world a new and indeed a better world, at any rate. That is the reason for the existence of the world as we know it today. That is stated in various places in the Bible; for example in Romans 8, where it says that the whole creation until now is in travail. The translators thought it was a sort of figure of speech and made of it: “groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.” But it says simply: the whole creation is in travail. Out of that world a new world is to be brought forth. Hence in the Bible important figures are quite often born from an extra-marital relationship, or from a harlot or a strange woman. In those circumstances these strange women, with a story attached, are always a picture of the world in general, and more narrowly applied of Israel, which indeed is literally called “that whore”.
There is also another line we might follow. In Romans 3, after a long exposition, the situation of the whole of mankind is once more described. Of that it says, with quotations from the Old Testament, that of all that mankind there is none that doeth good; “they are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable.” Unprofitable for what? If mankind were profitable, for what then? What was the purpose of the creation as such, and of man in particular? Of us, who have become children of God, who are born again and thus have become firstfruits of a New Creation, it is said that we have become profitable. We are now suddenly enabled – made competent – to serve God. The creation ought to serve God and thus contribute to the glory and honour of God. In practice the creation, this old world, because of the working of sin and thereby of death, is not able to do so. The work of redemption which God accomplishes in Christ has in fact as its goal to bring forth a creation which is profitable after all. If that old creation cannot be made profitable in itself, God has so ordered it that that old creation is nonetheless profitable, namely in that it serves as the mother out of whom a New Creation is begotten. We, who are New Creatures, are made competent to serve God and thus, if it is well, live to the glory of God.

> Romans 6:4
> “…that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should
> walk in newness of life.”

These are very elementary matters, found in the first chapters of Romans. On the one hand it concerns the glory of God, and on the other perhaps the righteousness of God. That He lost righteousness I have never read in the Bible, but that God is concerned to demonstrate His righteousness – which He also does through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ – is expounded at length in Romans 3. God has “set [him] forth to be a propitiation”, to be “a declaration of his righteousness”. On the one hand we as believers are expected to glorify God; on the other we are indeed expected to justify God.
That gradual stripping away, loss of glory on God’s side, we see throughout the whole Old Testament history. The lowest point is the death of the Lord Jesus. That is at the same time the ending point. Next follows utmost exaltation. It is that same route – from humiliation to utmost

exaltation – which we also encounter in many Old Testament histories. It is not always noticed, but it occurs very often. Striking is the history of Joseph: a way of humiliation and rejection, first by his own brethren, then in Egypt. A way of slander. He is reckoned as dead, he is sold, comes into slavery, into prison, and from one moment to the next he is highly exalted. Higher he could not be. The same applies later to the “Son of Joseph”.

The Lord Jesus did not merely look humbled; He was humbled and was exalted. In this whole passage it is especially about that little word “wherefore” at the beginning of this verse. Not: God then highly exalted Him, but: wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him. The exaltation of the Lord Jesus was, by Biblical standards, not because He came from heaven. If He originally belonged in heaven and is in heaven at last for that reason, why then all the goings-on in between? That is not thereby explained. Some say that He was highly exalted because He, from God’s side, by the Holy Spirit, was conceived in Mary, and thus was not only Son in the sense of heir of God, but also Son in the sense of being born out of God by nature. Why then not at once? If you say that all that openeth the womb is destined for God, that is so, but then straightaway and not after so many years, and certainly not after this way of suffering.

The Biblical argument is quite different. God has highly exalted Him because He first allowed Himself to be highly humbled and “became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him. As far as I know, the Bible knows no other reason. There are quite a number of matters mentioned in the Bible for which various reasons are given; that may indeed be multiple, but I have never found that here in Scripture. I know of only one, and that is that the exaltation of the Lord Jesus rests upon His obedience, His submissiveness, His humiliation, as it is called here, and His faith. Usually it is called “His faith” or “His obedience”. We find that also here again in verse 8. For that reason God has highly exalted Him. The thought is of the exaltation of a Man, who indeed had already died. Deeper a man cannot be humbled. Thereafter He was highly exalted, to the right hand of God.

The title “Son of man”, which the Lord Jesus uses for Himself, occurs really only in the Gospels and once in Acts 7:56, and thereafter no more. The origin of the term lies in Daniel 7. There we see the Son of man in heaven. In Psalm 8 He also appears, which is unjustly often not applied to the Lord Jesus, although Hebrews 2 explicitly does so. It is that title which the Lord Jesus uses, which is inherited from Adam by way of Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahalaleel, Noah, Abraham, David, Solomon, and so on. Thus the Lord Jesus calls Himself during His walk on earth, and afterwards we really hear no more of it, except once more at the stoning of Stephen in:

> Acts 7:56
> “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.”

The Son of man, placed in a position at the right hand of God.

The striking thing is that here it is not the Son of God at the right hand of God, but the Son of man. The thought is – and that also appears from the circumstances and from Stephen’s speech – that this Jesus was indeed

rejected by the Jews, but nevertheless highly exalted by God. This Jesus is now at the right hand of God, highly exalted. God has had mercy on Him, has set Him at His right hand, and moreover has declared Him to be His own Son.

What is remarkable, however, is that the Lord Jesus continually calls Himself the Son of man, but after this event He is never called so again. Afterwards He is usually called the Son of God. That is the highest title, whereas when He was on earth the highest title was “Son of man”. In the Gospel of John these two titles are emphatically linked. God has given to His Son – the Son of God – all judgment, because He is the Son of man. (John 5:26)

> John 5:25–27
> “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear
> the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.
> For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself;
> And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man.”

The Son of man indeed has the right, the authority, to execute judgment over the whole earth. He is the heir of Adam; He is to subject the whole earth to Himself. God has given these things to His Son, because that Son of God is, on the other hand, the Son of man and thus the Heir of Adam.

> Genesis 9:6
> “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God
> made he man.”

I believe that in the highest sense of the expression “that man” it is indeed the Son of man, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the image of God. If this statement stands in the New Testament, it means nothing if it were to refer to every man. That is what people think, but it is not so. Man is not by nature the image of God. We can see that too. We have to invent all kinds of things and read them into the text to make it sound at all plausible. Man is not the image of God; he ought to be the image of God.

> “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.” (Genesis 1:26)

It does not say “men”; there is a word in the singular, and one should really translate it as “man”. People have taken it as “mankind”, which is also singular, and therefore they translated it “men”. But it is in fact singular. In addition, it is not the ordinary word for man; it says Adam, and that is not the general word for man. People have made it so, but that is not correct. “Adam” is the word for “red”. It literally says: let us make Adam – one, therefore. The translators understood that it was not about one individual, but about many. In that they were right, but it is not good that they have built that already into the translation, more strongly than it stands in the original. That is where the problem lies.

The first man who is a bearer of the image of God is not Adam, but “the last Adam”. (1 Corinthians 15:45) All the rest is preliminary. That simply means that the creation of Adam only anticipates what was ultimately to come. Adam is not that Man; the Lord Jesus Christ is that Man. We find this

in Psalm 8, where the question is asked, “What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man…?” – a later generation, therefore. Hebrews 2 gives the answer: the Lord Jesus.
The thought is that a humanity should be formed in the image and likeness of God, but the first of that humanity would not be this first Adam, but the last Adam. The last Adam is the Firstfruits of the new humanity, and thereafter – if it is well – you and I follow. We are changed into the same image. We are to be conformed to the image of God’s Son. We are to become bearers of the image of God. Man is not a bearer of the image of God.
If you believe that man is a bearer of the image of God, you have a problem with those expressions which say, in very triumphant terms, that the Lord Jesus Christ is that image. Then it all means nothing any more. And on the other side you have a problem with the expressions that say that we – you and I – shall become bearers of the image of God, shall be changed into the same image (2 Corinthians 3), or be “conformed to the image of his Son” (Romans 8). Those texts mean nothing if we already were so by nature.
There is always someone who says that man was originally a bearer of the image of God, but lost it through the Fall. That is only said when this discussion arises. If it is not being discussed, people stubbornly maintain that man in general is a bearer of the image of God. When question marks and Bible texts are placed alongside, then they say that this image of God has been lost, as though it were some kind of covering. Then suddenly he was naked and had to be clothed. That is not correct either, because man was always naked; he simply did not see it. He was not conscious of it. Arguments are constantly dragged in that are not sound in themselves. Man is not a bearer of the image of God. We bear the image of the first man. (1 Corinthians 15) There it says that the first man was “of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven.” We must be changed into His image. Through new birth – whereby we receive part in the life of the last Adam, namely Christ – we are changed, and thus become bearers of the image of God.
The text, “the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil” (Genesis 3:22), means that God already knew good and evil, but man did not – until the sin of Adam. Then he also knew the evil. According to that passage, God Himself had part in the evil. I do not say that He invented evil, sin, or brought it into the world, as some do claim. The text often causes problems, because some use it to say that good and evil, from the beginning and by nature, existed in God. The Jews actually teach that too. They also have the idea that evil went with the feminine side of God, and good remained with the masculine side of God. The intention is that in the future this will all be brought together again. That is official Jewish teaching. The thought is certainly that God had part in the evil and was aware of it.
In fact it is so that the Lord – Jehovah, therefore, the outward expression of God – already then bore the guilt of the world. “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin.” (2 Corinthians 5:21) When did that happen? In the superficial line of reasoning: at His becoming Man. If we go

a little deeper: from the moment He lost glory. He lost that when He became jointly responsible for the existence of this sinful world. Before Adam sinned. Before the earth became without form, and void, and dark. When it says, “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Revelation 13:8), people say: the Lamb is the Lord Jesus, and He was slain when He was crucified. But it says: “from the foundation of the world”. That can never be made to fit chronologically, but it can in another way of reasoning. That Lamb already bore the sin of the world before that “casting down” – before the without form, void and darkness. Thereby it was also fixed that He should die for it. He was made to be sin and would bear it.

When thereafter the Fall of Adam takes place, it can be said: “the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil.” “Us” is plural, but not necessarily three. If you ask me, I do not get beyond two: namely the Being of God, and the expression of the Being of God. “The expression of the Being of God” means He who carries out God’s thoughts. He is made responsible for the existence of the sinful world as such.

Adam, who was formed out of this sinful world, out of dust of a sinful world, and thus in fact was a sinner from the moment he opened his eyes, was not conscious of that sin, but after he sinned he was. So it has gone with us too. We were already sinners before we opened our eyes – and that soon became apparent. So it was with Adam also.

“Man returns to the ground because he is a sinner” – but that is not what is written. That is only part of the story. It says: man returns to the ground because he was taken out of it. “For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” (Genesis 3:19) In that account sin plays no role. Sin does have a role in it: because man is from the earth, he is a sinner and therefore sins, and then returns to the earth. The apostle Paul says concerning this that there are even people who have not actively sinned, had no knowledge of it, but still died. Thus they were sinners. (Romans 5:12ff.) Whence then does that death come? From the fact that they were already sinners. They returned to the earth because they were taken from it.

That does not take away man’s moral responsibility for sin. We stand guilty before God because we are sinners. You cannot help being a sinner – Adam neither. He was formed out of that old fallen world that lay under judgment. Hence it always says that Adam, the first man, was out of the earth, earthy. (1 Corinthians 15:47)

The Lord Himself, Jehovah, the expression of the Being of God, has taken upon Himself the responsibility for this sinful world, has identified Himself with this world and has had mercy upon it. That is portrayed quite often in the Old Testament. One of the loveliest histories, in my view, is that of David and Bathsheba. In circles that live under the Law you are not allowed to say that there is anything lovely about it, but it is so. David has compassion on Bathsheba and has to bear the consequences – and he does.

David is a type of the Lord Himself – Jehovah, the Lord Jesus Christ. Bathsheba, the daughter (bath) or house (beth) of the seven. The daughter of the house of the seven is a picture of the world, which as a

whole is called a house. The house of God was made in those seven days of Genesis 1. Bathsheba was subject (married) to Uriah – light. I see in that the world which was subject to the angel of light, the morning star, the light-bearer, in short: the devil himself. It was a lawful marriage. And what does David do? He falls in love with Bathsheba – “for God so loved the world” – a world that was joined to another man, namely the devil. But that man he sends into the battle, and he is slain. Thus He overcomes him that had the power of death, and thus the woman is loosed from the law of her husband. That applies not only to Israel, but also to the whole world. (Romans 7) The woman is free from the law of her husband so that she may be married to another. She marries David. That man has thereby taken guilt upon himself; there comes also a judgment from God.
Then a son is born of her, but something is wrong with him. He is sick, and David fasts and mourns seven days long. Then the child dies – and then there is feasting. That is a beautiful picture of our present dispensation. The nameless son, the first that was born there, is a picture of the Church. As long as she is there, the rest of the history stands still. That is the first fruit of that marriage. Afterwards Solomon is born after all, a picture of the revelation of the Kingdom. Beautiful imagery.
And we have not even spoken yet of all those other cases, such as Rahab the harlot as a picture of the present world – but a believing one – and she receives sons, and eventually David is born from her. He descends from the line of Rahab the harlot, and she is also named in Matthew 1 in the genealogy of the Lord Jesus. She is a picture of this world, is taken into the family, and from her the Son is born. We find that much more often.
That indeed means that David, after the prophet Nathan has pointed out his guilt to him after he has taken Bathsheba, writes in Psalm 51: “in sin did my mother conceive me… Against thee, thee only, have I sinned… Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin… Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me… and take not thy holy spirit from me.” Those are words of the Lord Jesus, therefore – as always with the words of David. And there we have expressed that the Lord Himself took guilt upon Himself when He had mercy on this world. He did not do that at His birth in Bethlehem, but at the bringing into being of this present world.
On the basis of, among other things, Romans 8, I always say that that old world fell into sin, and then we arrive at the present world, which was made in those seven days of Genesis 1 – but that is a pregnant world. There the union came into being; there is a kind of fellowship between man and woman. It was Eve who sinned (see also 1 Timothy 2:14), and Adam went with her. I think that this is indeed a picture of the world that sinned, but the Lord goes with that world. From that there then comes forth a new world.
That means that the whole history of salvation has only one goal: the restoration of the glory of God, and thereby also the righteousness of God. Moreover, if we conclude that the whole history of salvation is fulfilled in the history, or in the Person, of the Lord Jesus Christ, what then has the Lord Jesus Christ done? “I have glorified thee on the earth,” He says, “and now, O Father, glorify thou me… with the glory which I had with thee

before the world was.” It is not in the first place a work for the deliverance of mankind or the saving of the world. The goal is the glory of God, and the means is the saving of the world. We are delivered and saved unto the glory of God. We benefit greatly from it; it is also to our glory and to our blessing, but it is not the goal.
Since we have been saved, we ought, just like the Lord Jesus Christ, to live “to the glory of the Father” and “walk in newness of life.” (Romans 6:4)

Philippians 2:10
“That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth.”
There are those who conclude from this that all who are in heaven, on earth and under the earth will therefore be saved, because they bow the knee to the Lord Jesus. This is popular in the doctrine of universal reconciliation. But it is incorrect, for the verse is quoted from:

> Isaiah 45:21
> “Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together:
> who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time?
> have not I the LORD? and there is no God else beside me;
> a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me.”

The LORD has beforehand declared things which, in the course of history, came to fulfilment. God is God also because He knows the future. The point here is that He ought to be recognised as God on the basis of that fact. It says: “Who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD?” “LORD” here is in capitals; that means that in the original text it is Jehovah. Jehovah means “I AM”; so it says: “have not I, Jehovah?” And there is no God beside, or apart from, Him. “A just God” – note how often this is stated in the Bible, as though it were under discussion, and indeed it is – “and a Saviour; there is none beside me.”
Who then is the Saviour? Jehovah Himself, and He is God. Beside Him there is no one. There is only One, namely. Insofar as some recognise Father and Son here, they are One. That is what it says here. “I am Jehovah; and there is no God else beside me. I am [a] Saviour; there is none beside me.”

> Isaiah 45:22–23
> “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth:
> for I am God, and there is none else.
> I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness,
> and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.”

Here it is speaking of the Gospel, in which the righteousness and justice of God are revealed (Romans 1). A word that would not be revoked. Every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess Him. That is what is also cited in Philippians 2.

> Isaiah 45:24
> “Surely, shall one say, in the LORD have I righteousness and strength:

even to him shall men come; and all that are incensed against him shall be ashamed."

If you place Philippians 2:10 and these verses side by side, it becomes clear that that "name of Jesus" is the Name Jehovah, and therefore it is the Lord Jesus. Here the judgment is announced over those who were "incensed against him" – that is, unbelievers. You can absolutely not conclude from Philippians 2:10 that all men will be saved. The conclusion must be that all will be subjected to Him, but that means that a part will be judged, on that same occasion, and thus precisely not saved.

Isaiah 41:11–12

"Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded:

they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish.

Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, even them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought.

This is about exactly the same thing: the complete removal of all unbelievers—at least, of those who were or are in rebellion against the Lord. It is emphatically stated that all shall be subjected unto Him; but that means that all shall be judged by Him. "And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man." (John 5:27) The Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son. One may regard that, too, as a commentary on these verses, especially those in Isaiah 45. The same expression is used in Romans 14:

Romans 14:10–11

10 But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

11 For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.

This is taken directly from Isaiah 45. Here it is linked with the rapture of the Church, more specifically with our manifestation before the judgment seat of Christ. The thought is that, indeed, every knee shall bow unto Him —everyone will be judged by Him—but that does not mean this happens collectively and at one and the same time. It proceeds in stages and in categories. Eventually every knee shall bow before Him, and all will have to acknowledge Him as the one true and righteous God, who will bring a righteous judgment.

When God does this, and He is then visible, the Lord Jesus is seen as the expression of the being of God. It is Jehovah—but we know Him as the Lord Jesus. He is the Son of man—but we also know Him as God. There is nothing more to be seen than that, and there is nothing more to imagine. When God presents Himself, and thus gives a portrayal of Who He is, then in Old Testament times the form of Jehovah appears. Since the resurrection, the form that appears is that of the Lord Jesus, in whom God and man are joined together.

Philippians 2:10–11

That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and

things in earth, and things under the earth;
11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.
Notice that here the names Jesus and Christ are added. Those are not in Isaiah, of course—but the apostle Paul indicates that it **is** indeed He. In Isaiah it is simply “the LORD”, but here it is said that this name Lord has been given to the Lord Jesus. Thus Isaiah 45 is indeed fulfilled in Jesus Christ the Lord.
The goal of all the work of God—or, if you will, of the Lord Jesus Christ—is the glory of God. All who are now still in rebellion against Him shall, in the future, have to subject themselves to Him and acknowledge Him as the one true God, and thus as their Lord. But that Lord will, in many cases, condemn them and bring them to nothing.
This means that the Lord Jesus has received the highest position that can be thought of. There may be something higher, but we are unable to conceive it. God is the One whom no man hath seen at any time; He is the invisible God, who dwelleth in light which no man can approach unto. We usually say the Godhead, to make it somewhat more “abstract”. We cannot form any mental image of Him; and insofar as there is an image, it is the Lord Jesus.
If in the future we have to do with the judgment seat of Christ, if that seat is to be seen, we shall see Christ on it. When, years later, there is mention of the great white throne of God, on the Last Day in Revelation, and one can see it, then the Lord Jesus Christ is seated upon that throne. One may call it the judgment of God, but the Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son. So if a judge is seen on that throne, it is Christ.
In Revelation we usually see the Lamb, who is set before us as the Lion of the tribe of Judah: the humbled One, who has been exalted.
(See side note 22.)

Philippians 2:12
Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.
Fear and trembling is, in Scripture, the expression for weakness and a certain uncertainty. Paul writes to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 2 that: “I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling.” Fear, in general, presupposes submission to someone—not so much terror, as reckoning with them. It has to do with the recognition that there are powers and persons who are stronger than we are. We should fear them; and thus we should fear God.
Here it is about working out our own salvation “with fear and trembling”. That is, perhaps, in weakness, in humility, in service, after the example of the Lord Jesus Himself. Paul says: “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities… for when I am weak, then am I strong”—“for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” (2 Corinthians 12) Here he is saying the same thing.
Pay special attention to the word “wherefore” in this manner, after this example, in the way of the Lord Jesus. How do we work out our own

salvation with fear and trembling? Through obedience. They had always been obedient, and the intention is, of course, that they should continue—and so work out their salvation.

The Lord Jesus was “obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (verse 8). We are to follow that obedience; and as for us, it is then added that this will lead to our salvation.

If that is “wherefore”—that is, in the same manner as the Lord Jesus—then it means that His obedience led to His salvation. We obtain salvation in the same way as He did, namely through faith. Therefore Ephesians can say that we are “blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” His blessings are also ours. We share in the blessings of Christ. His salvation is our salvation and is wrought in the same way.

Ephesians says that His election is our election; His predestination unto the adoption of children is our predestination unto the adoption of children; His redemption is our redemption; His grace is our grace; His inheritance is our inheritance; His power is our power; the riches of the glory of His inheritance are likewise ours.

We should subject ourselves to the Word of God and remain in it. Hebrews 5 teaches that He “learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.” (Hebrews 5:8–9) Those are fundamental statements. His obedience is a synonym for His faith and humility. “Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart.” Humility belongs with obedience and submission. Meekness is linked in Scripture with faith—a gentle disposition, a receptive heart.

“Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.” (James 1:21)

People stumble over the expression “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” Since when would we, by works, work out our own salvation? Are we not saved by grace, without works? “Not of works, lest any man should boast”—and “to him that worketh not, but believeth… his faith is counted for righteousness.”

In our Christian or evangelical jargon, the word salvation stands for being born again, receiving eternal life, going to heaven, becoming a child of God, and so on. That is right; yet it does not take away the fact that the concept of salvation in Scripture includes more than just that.

Salvation stands for all things that pertain unto life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). It covers everything a person can receive from God. What God wants to give us in Christ is not merely this childship of God, but sonship—mature sonship. That positioning as sons is part of that salvation. Full salvation does not consist in becoming a child of God, but in becoming a son of God. Becoming a child of God is the first, very important and necessary stage on that way. He would bring many—sinners of flesh and blood—unto sonship. He is still occupied with that. That is our salvation; and it does not come about apart from our practical life. It comes about through works.

James sets this out at length in those passages where many choke:

James 2:14

What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?

Luther took the question out and said: “According to Paul it can.” If you took this question out of James and put it to Paul, he would say “yes.” In that Luther was quite right. But James’s answer, going by the context, is “no”. And that led Luther to think that James did not really belong in the Bible.

If, however, we leave the verse where it stands, we conclude from the context of James that he is speaking about other matters than those Paul deals with. When Paul speaks about the faith that can save a man, he is speaking about being born again. That has everything to do with “being saved”.

Where James speaks, it is not about the new birth as such, but about what follows from it. He speaks about “the saving of the soul” (James 1:21). That is not about the new birth itself. He assumes his readers are already born again. He is speaking about that salvation being worked out in life. That is: if one has become saved in spirit, born of the Spirit, a child of God, this can only have meaning if it also becomes manifest outwardly in practical life.

That is nothing other than what Paul says: “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.” (Ephesians 4:1) That concerns a thoroughly practical life, and he adds quite a number of admonitions and directions. James does the same.

The question in James is whether that faith can save a man as to his soul —that is, as to his practical life. And the answer is “no”. To save here means nothing else than: to receive something from the Lord. He gives us something; He blesses us.

James says that we may indeed ask the Lord—but if we do not submit ourselves to the Lord, He will not give us anything (James 1:7). There it is not a matter of whether a person is a believer or not, but whether he, in practice, lives by faith. If he does not, then he certainly must not imagine…

Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, even them that contended with thee:

they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought.

…that he shall receive any thing of the Lord. Where people complain that prayers are not answered, that the Lord does not hear, it may well be that such people are not living by faith, not submitting themselves to the Lord. In short: a faith without works cannot save a man.

James has already said expressly in chapter 1 that:

James 1:18

“Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.”

When the term “firstfruits” in the Bible is applied to people, it is “firstborn ones”: those with the birthright. That is a legal term in connection with the right of inheritance. To what end have we become children of God? That we might be set as firstborn ones of a New Creation.

But what still has to happen in the meantime? That we should be “doers of the word” (James 1:22), and not hearers only. That we should not deceive ourselves with false reasonings – namely, with the idea that we are children of God and that that is the end of the matter. One extreme is to say that one must work in order even to be saved at all, and the other extreme is to say that one is born again by faith and that that is the end of the matter. It is true that one is then a child of God, and that this can never be undone. But something should still change: something should be added, for the child should grow up and become heir. That is the purpose of every child, according to Biblical standards. That also is called “salvation”.
To that end we ought to submit ourselves to the Lord and to His Word, and then He will accomplish His work in us.

Philippians 2:13–15
“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.
Do all things without murmurings and disputings:
That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;”
So it is about practical things. If we now understand that in the life of the Lord Jesus it was about practical things – His practical service, His submission to the Word of God, to the Scriptures, that is, to His Father in heaven – that makes it much more concrete and clear for us. The Lord never said: “My Father has said…” The Lord said: “It is written…” That is knowledge of the Scriptures; that is what He lived from, what He believed; evidently He had studied them, and He held them before His contemporaries. He drew the consequences from them. That is what is expected of each one of us: faith, submission to the Word of God, whatever another may say. God has spoken, and we ought to be humble and submit ourselves to that.
That is exactly the opposite of arrogance – which is contradiction. To say: “That may be in the Bible, but whether it is really so…” is arrogance. That is not humble and not modest. It is the height of pride to set oneself above the Word of God and to question what is written, as though we could know better. Modest and humble is when we say: It is in the Bible, and that is what I hold to.
In that way we “work out” our own salvation in our practical life. Not only with a view to reward in heaven, but also now, in our present time. It may be that it has been promised that glory shall be revealed to us (Romans 8), but that does not mean that only then we shall receive glory. It does not say that either. The thought is that we already receive that glory now, and that it works itself out in our life and in our being. We shall not be changed one day into the image of God; we are being changed into the image of God. We shall not receive glory only then; we are now already changed from glory to glory. Therefore it says: work out the salvation of your own self now already. Our life is to be holy now already, blessed now already, and receive blessing now already – not only in the future.

Our salvation, or the salvation of our soul, comes about through works, as James 2 says. But those are not just any works: they are the works of which Ephesians 2:10 says:

> Ephesians 2:10
> “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works,
> which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

That means that we must know which works are expected of us. They are works which the Lord has prepared. No one else can tell us what they are. How then do we know which works they are? The thought is that God Himself would make them known to us. He would namely work in us the willing. In practice this means that He would bring about in us a certain will to work. He would see to that. God works in us the willing and then also the outworking of it, the doing. As it were He lays the will in us to do certain things, and thereafter He also gives us the opportunity to carry out that will.

How then do we know when it is the will of God? If it turns out that it cannot be carried out, then it was not the will of God. The will which He works in us will be followed by “doing”, because He gives that too. If we cannot accomplish our will, that is not good for our sense of self-worth, but that is not the Lord’s concern. Therefore humility is expected of us. That already helps a great deal. Under all circumstances we should thank the Lord when something succeeds. Whether it was specifically His will or not, we do not know for sure.

Because it is He who works in us both to will and to do, it all remains grace. Even when we receive “reward according to [our] labour”, reward for these good works, it is still grace. We cannot do otherwise. When Peter and John had to appear before the council in Acts 4, their answer likewise was: we cannot but speak. Exactly the same idea. It is namely God who works in us both the willing and the doing of His good pleasure. Therefore it remains grace.

An important aspect of this grace is not the forgiveness of sins, but the ability to serve God. Not on the basis of our certificates, but on the basis of our new birth. God has made us – and apparently this applies to all the Corinthians as well (2 Corinthians 3) – “able ministers of the new testament”. On the ground that we have received new life. Further things follow from that, but that we may serve the Lord is His grace. That we subsequently receive reward for it is logical. To be allowed to work for a master is usually also the goodwill of the one who hires you. For the work you receive wages. It begins with the job you receive. If you receive wages thereafter, you have earned those. So it is also in our situation as children of God. We have received a “job” by the grace of God, and that our lives thereby receive meaning and content is the grace of God. That there is an answer to the question why we are here, that we can spend our lives in a meaningful way, is the grace of God. That we shall not stand empty-handed in heaven is the grace of God. That we shall be in heaven is also the grace of God. If we then appear “clothed upon”, that too is grace. But it is connected with our willingness to submit ourselves to the Lord.

Romans 12:2
“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind,
that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

After this, in the following verses, it speaks of the specific responsibilities various believers have. Which responsibility we have, we are to “prove”; but that only comes after we have been transformed (at least in part) by the renewing of our mind. As we learn to understand the Word of God and thus the truth of God, we shall also learn to understand and experience what His good and well-pleasing will is for our personal life. Not according to our pleasure, but according to His good pleasure.

Colossians 1:9–10
“…that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;
That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work,
and increasing in the knowledge of God;”

Here it is about spiritual understanding. By that one would namely be “filled with the knowledge of his will”, here specifically with regard to our walk.

Colossians 1:12
“Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:”

We shall then receive reward for this, which we come across several times in Philippians and also in the other epistles. Where God places a certain will in us, we have the responsibility to carry out that will.

1 Timothy 3:1
“This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.”

The thought is that one may indeed have a desire for such a thing; there is nothing wrong with that. In some circles they use different language for it. But if the Lord really lays a will in our heart, we should not trumpet it abroad, but simply do it. If you tell others, it only becomes harder to carry it out, whereas it is our responsibility simply to do it – certainly if we are so sure about it.

The willing can also be worked in our heart not only intuitively, but because it is awakened in some way. When we hear that certain things or certain people are needed for particular activities, that can awaken the will to be involved in that. It does not go purely intuitively or exclusively via the working of the Spirit. Just as it is the intention that we be led by the Spirit into all truth, yet the Lord has nevertheless given some to the Church as teachers. It is therefore not only the Spirit who does it.

We have seen three passages (Romans 12, Colossians 1, Philippians 2) where it says that God stirs up that will in us. He makes us know that will, and our responsibility as children of God is to respond to that, to work it out. We are namely servants of God. We have a Lord whom we are to serve. That means nothing if it has no practical consequences in our life. What that means for each individual is each one’s own responsibility. In

that connection we read in Romans 12 that we shall all have to give account to our Lord. If the Lord has truly made His will known to us, He gives us the possibilities to carry it out. At the same time it is our limit. That is also mentioned in Romans 12. He gives gifts, responsibilities to believers, but in measure. We are servants; it is not about a career or suchlike. It is about service, in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus, as is set forth here from verse 5–8 onward. Just as the Lord Jesus carried out the will of God for His life – He spoke the words of God and did the works of God – thus He has worked out His own salvation with fear and trembling, and thus we also are to do, after His example, in order then also to be judged by Him.

Verse 14 says: “Do all things without murmurings and disputings.” Ever since the Israelites so often conjugated the verb “to murmur” in the wilderness, we know that it means grumbling, complaining. If God has laid a particular will in our heart, we should simply carry it out. If we are honest with ourselves, we often know very well what the will of God is for our life in general, and sometimes also at a particular moment in particular. We should give effect to it, and do it “without murmurings and disputings”.

The word “disputings” is a bit too strong; that is not exactly what stands there. The word actually means inner discussion, reasoning, “deliberations”. One should simply do it. The thought is that another has nothing to do with it. The word can also be taken as “thoughts”: that is, that we do not discuss it with others, but with ourselves. We often know very well how and what, but we can always think up arguments not to have to do it. Raising objections against ourselves. That is the daily practice of life for many people. Not only in relation to God, but generally in relation to their own responsibilities. We can always think of something to get out of it.

“Disputings” is elsewhere also translated as “evil thoughts”, “wicked thoughts”, “imaginations”, “reasonings”, “questionings”, “debate”, “contention”, and so on. In any case it is clear that there is nothing positive about this word, and that in principle it concerns inward reasonings, especially with oneself. It always has to do with looking for excuses, devising intrigues, manipulating, talking oneself out from under responsibility. That is what it says here.

These things which God works in us we should simply do, without murmurings and without evil reasonings. Simply do them, without resentment, without looking at one another or shifting the responsibility onto someone else. When we do so, we shall in any case receive reward from God for it. It may well be that among men, and even among the brethren and sisters, it does not often concern honourable things. Perhaps you gain no honour by them – but that was not the purpose, at least not here. The purpose is that we should receive glory from the Lord in the Day of Christ.

The point is that God has begun a good work in us, and He wishes to perform it, to complete it, in our days in the flesh. That is how it should be, and that is how we should walk. The result of that is discussed in verse 15. We shall not only be “blameless and harmless” in the Day of Christ, but

now already. In the midst of a “crooked and perverse nation” – so it is called because “there is none that doeth good” (Romans 3:12). It is a world-population that in practice lives under the dominion of Satan. The only good that can be done is to walk in those good works which God has prepared beforehand. In them we are to walk during our life here.

> Ephesians 2:2, 10
> “Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world,
> according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience…
> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works,
> which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

There are only two possibilities: either we walk in trespasses and sins, in accordance with the god of this age, or we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, and walk in the good works which He hath before ordained, in accordance with the good, acceptable and perfect will of God. That is set out in stark black and white, but it can be so stated. God has made us competent to be servants of God under the New Covenant (2 Corinthians 3). For we must all be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5). We ought to live as blameless and sincere children of God in the midst of this world.

The Lord has given Himself for us, that He might deliver us from this present evil world (Galatians 1). That is not a theoretical matter that will somehow sort itself out automatically. It is a practical matter, for which we ourselves bear, to a large extent, responsibility.

Believers ought to be blameless and sincere; without rebuke, “without spot, or wrinkle”, as it is said elsewhere. The Lord would cleanse us and present us to Himself “a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing”. That takes place in this way: by “the washing of water by the word”. That Word is to have in us the practical effect which is described here in verses 12, 13 and 14. That is the intention of the present work of Christ on us and in us. He cleanses us by the Word, or by His blood, that is, by His life.

The purpose of this is that, being cleansed, we should serve the living God (Hebrews 9:14). He would purge our conscience from dead works – not just because that is pleasant for us, but in order that we, in that condition, might be able to serve the living God. Being blameless, sincere and unreprovable is not merely some theoretical matter, or a bare statement of fact. It is a practical matter, whereby we, in the practice of our life, not only believe in Him, but also suffer for Him, or are patient, as is said at the end of chapter 1. Afterwards we are to live as children of God, sincere and without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.

> Hebrews 12:11–13
> “Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous:
> nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness
> unto them which are exercised thereby.

Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;
And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way;
but let it rather be healed.”

We spoke earlier about patience. Here another word is used, and it is called “chastening”. Under all circumstances it is about education. We, as children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, are being brought up unto sonship. It is about straight paths, a straight way, a straight race. That concerns the New Covenant, which is straight.

It is best, as children of God, to go through life on principle and to walk a straight way. In the long term that is absolutely the simplest. Not that it is easy, but all things considered it is the most straightforward. If we, as children of God, live here on earth, we will in any case have problems, because we live in a world which is ruled by darkness. If you then already have conflict with just about everyone, you must above all see to it that you do not have conflict with yourself, and that you always stand upright before the Lord, in all honesty and with a good conscience.

We shine as lights in the world. That light in the world is the expression, or picture, of that priestly people to whom the words of God have been entrusted, in order that when someone seeks that light, that light will in fact be there. When someone seeks the truth, there ought to be a priest somewhere in the vicinity who can pass on that truth. That is the function of the Church in our days. Not in an aggressive way, by doing everything possible to convert the world, but we are to be ready always to give an answer concerning the hope that is in us.

God has given evangelists to the Church, and for the sake of the Church, in order that the Gospel might be preached. Not for the sake of the world, or for the sake of the public revelation of the Kingdom, but for the edification – that is, the extension – of the Church.

Colossians 4:4–6
“That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.
Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.
Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt,
that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.”

We are expected to answer every man, and thus to give an account of the hope that is in us. That answering takes place “with grace, seasoned with salt”. That is drawn from Old Testament typology, for salt is a picture of the Holy Spirit. We are to express, or pass on, the thoughts of God. It is also taken from the meal offerings: there always had to be salt on them, according to the Biblical preparations. True life is not there without salt – that is, without the Holy Spirit.

We are therefore indeed “the light of the world” and “the salt of the earth”, and the Lord says that to His disciples long before His death and resurrection. The disciples are beforehand the picture of the Church. They were to be the firstfruits of it, and hence it is spoken to them. The function of light of the world and salt of the earth is only actually entrusted to them in practice after His resurrection: “ye shall be witnesses unto me” and “witnesses unto the people”. Afterwards it applies to the whole Church as such. That is also the responsibility which we have.

Philippians 2:16
“Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.”
What is here translated “holding forth” is elsewhere rendered “give heed to”, or “take heed”, “observe”, “attend to”. It means, namely, to “pay attention to”. We are to pay attention to this Word, which on this occasion is called “the word of life”. It is so called because it is to fill our lives – not only our hearts, and certainly not only our minds. It is about practical things. That Word is to give content to our lives in practice, because that Word is to work in us both the willing and the doing. Because through that Word we are to be renewed in our thinking and to “prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God”. That is why it is called “the word of life”.
The intention is not that we should master the Word, but that the Word should master us. That means we do not subject the Bible to ourselves, but that we subject ourselves to the Bible. Afterwards that Word is then to determine, in practice, our lives to a great extent. Our life is shaped by the things to which we direct our attention. Then it will indeed be the case that this Word determines our experience.
Although our life may, in outward appearance, not look very different from that of unbelievers, it is nevertheless intended that there should be an enormous difference in experience. In how we see and experience things. Temptation is not pleasant, but Scripture says: “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.” That means that you can experience it positively. Chastening “seemeth to be grievous”, we read in Hebrews 12, but if you experience it as education, then you can undergo it very positively. Hence: “word of life”.
We say very easily – because the Bible says so – that the Word is life. The question is whether we also experience that, whether we grasp what the expression really means. Word in itself is not life; it is a figure of speech that means that the Word should determine our lives. It should make us truly live. The Word gives us that life of God, that eternal life, to live out in practice. The Word determines our experience. That is the intention of instruction and upbringing. Not so that our life thereafter is determined by what we must do, but so that it gives us sufficient strength and power in ourselves to live life, to stand firm under all circumstances, to be able to put things into perspective, to accept things as they are.
One is to learn beforehand in practice, in order thereafter to have a kind of immunity against all the misery that – in this practical life, in this sinful and mortal world – will inevitably come upon us. That is what Christian instruction was originally intended for. Knowledge of Scripture is also necessary for that. Knowledge of the Word of God is not meant so that, at some particular moment, when we find ourselves in certain circumstances, at a crossroads in our life, we then know whether we should turn left or right. That is Law. The Bible does not prescribe to us what we must do – on the contrary.
What knowledge of the truth is needed for is this: that whether we go left or right – depending on circumstances, which we often have little control

over – we can nevertheless remain standing; that we know our position and keep our strength; that is, that His strength is made perfect in our weakness.
Where the Philippians – and we also – take heed to that Word, hold forth the word of life, and submit themselves to the teaching, it is to praise and honour; at any rate, to the apostle Paul. We may not immediately think of that, but evidently the apostle himself does. For he is teaching them these things, and that will be to his honour in the future. That is the purpose of the ministry of the apostle Paul: the instruction of the members of the Church as such, and the exemplary role he has for the Church, in which he at any rate holds himself forth as an example.
Therefore he says that these things will be to him “for a rejoicing” in the day of Christ. His work will have had effect with respect to this good work which the Lord has begun. He introduced this thought in Philippians 1:6, and here in Philippians 2:16 he is still speaking of it. The “day of Christ” is the same as the “day of Jesus Christ”. As all the Philippians, and all believers, so also the apostle Paul will one day be made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ, to receive from Him reward – preferably a full reward – because he has run the race that was set before him; and the Philippians would, of course, do the same.
Paul identifies himself with the Philippians. He assumes that they are together, one whole, belong together, in fellowship; and he says so also in the next verse. Paul is not to be the “boss” of the Philippians – on the contrary. They belong to the same Body, they are all children of God, of whom he also says:

Philippians 2:17
“Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.”
It says “offered”, but the word is simply the word for “poured out”. That it has nevertheless been translated “offered upon the sacrifice”, is because the next word is “sacrifice”. So it is about a sacrifice of the Philippians – evidently the meal offering – and upon that sacrifice drink is poured out. That is in accordance with the preperation for the meal offering. The basic idea remains that the life of these Philippians is a sacrifice to the Lord (Romans 12:2): that they “present [their] bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God”, and are then transformed in their thinking and prove the good and acceptable will of God.
These Philippians are supposed to be a sacrifice – that is, to have offered themselves, after the example of the Lord Jesus (Philippians 2:5–8). What that sacrifice represents is stated at once. The term “sacrifice” is in itself figurative, for its meaning is given immediately after it. It says “the sacrifice and service of your faith”. The point is not the sacrifice, but the service. That service is, as it were, that sacrifice – or vice versa. It is “the service of your faith”: your service in faith, your walk in faith.
Where we live by faith, that can only be there where we offer ourselves to our High Priest, to our Head, for the service of God. The intention is that the Philippians be available for that, and thus “do all things without murmurings and disputings”. That is their sacrifice, their service; and the

apostle says: If I may be poured out upon that – if I may be added to that sacrifice – then I belong to that sacrifice, and I rejoice, and rejoice with you all.
They are regarded as one whole, and therefore they all rejoice together.

Philippians 2:18
“And for the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.”
You could hardly say it more fully. I rejoice, and I rejoice together with you – and conversely, you (hopefully) rejoice with me. Everyone glad and blessed, precisely where one has, by grace, been given not only to believe on Christ, but also to suffer for Him. It is exactly that which brings fellowship and joy.

Philippians 2:19
And I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you,
that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.
The apostle Paul speaks here about Timothy, and then from verse 25 onwards about Epaphras, here called Epaphroditus. This Epaphroditus is evidently the one who delivers this letter to the Philippians – the man who is with Paul and acts as messenger. But before he names Epaphroditus, he first mentions Timothy, who would also be sent from Paul to the Philippians, though not yet.

Philippians 2:23
Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see
how it will go with me.
In one way or another Timothy was still occupied in the service of the apostle Paul, and could not yet leave; therefore Epaphroditus is sent ahead. Timothy was then to follow later – that was the intention. This may not seem very interesting to us at first sight, but the point is that both men are described. Paul gives a character sketch of Timothy and of Epaphroditus. As a result, we are given two further examples of this “mind which was also in Christ Jesus”.
We first had the example of the Lord Jesus Himself (verses 5–8), then that of Timothy (from verse 19), then of Epaphroditus (from verse 25), and afterwards the example of Paul himself (Philippians 3:4–16) – which, for some reason, is the most extensive. That is understandable, because the apostle himself stands as a pattern for the Church as such. Hence he is described so fully, and only at the end.
The life and service of a child of God is not subject to a list of prescriptions. We do not live under the Law. It would be “easier” for us, in a sense, if the Bible simply told us in detail what we ought to do. Such books are written, but the Bible itself does not do it that way – simply because, in practice, that is just Law, and moreover cannot be applied to each individual in exactly the same way.
The thought is not that we should walk according to prescribed rules that are laid upon us; the intention is that the life of Christ should be manifested in us – and that does not fit into a set of regulations. That is the point. Man, with his individual characteristics, cannot simply submit

himself to laws and rules without that being at the expense of his personality, and thus of his joy in life.
The more a person simply conforms outwardly to what is expected of him, to that same extent he loses his own personality – and with it his gladness. That is the deeper reason why Law does not work. The most fundamental problem is that man is a sinner, not capable of what is good, even if you oblige him to it. Generally speaking, where there are rigid prescriptions, they limit man's freedom – and that conflicts with his nature.
Teaching and upbringing ought to aim at forming a man inwardly, in his heart, so that in the freedom he will have later, he knows how to conduct himself according to certain norms and values without those being imposed rules. He is free to do what he wants – but he wants only this. In the Bible such a thing is called "the law written in the heart" of man. But that is exactly what ought to happen with the natural man as well. This is not yet specifically New Testament truth; it is generally true.
Laws and rules imposed from outside are only for children, for those who cannot bear responsibility. Beyond that, they are partly necessary for society as a whole. But the most important are norms and values – and that is "law in the heart". That is not something laid on from outside, but something instilled within. The Biblical term is "written in the heart".
So we come to Biblical truth which says that the Law, carved in stone and thus imposed upon the flesh, is not practicable for man. He dies under it; it costs him his joy of life, his freedom. Therefore it is necessary that Law, or teaching, be written in the heart of man. That would happen under the New Covenant. In that situation, where that teaching – that Law – is written in the heart, he is free and yet will behave in accordance with what may be expected.
A believer, a child of God, will behave as the Lord expects him to behave. That works. Only, our expectations of a child of God are often rather different from what the Lord expects. That is because we generalise and often want to set ourselves up as a pattern for others according to our own norms, while the Lord has other expectations. From God's side those expectations are of course exactly tailored to the individual person concerned.
The intention is that the Word of God should be written in our hearts, that we receive with meekness the engrafted Word, which is able to save our souls (James 1:21). When more specific instructions are necessary, they do not come to us in the form of detailed rules and regulations – for then it would again be imposed Law. They come to us in the form of examples, so that we may mirror ourselves in them.
With that we have all the basic possibilities of natural upbringing. On the one hand, people are taught in a comparatively theoretical way, and therefore children are sent to school. On the other hand, man by nature – as a child, while he is still searching – seeks examples. Ideally, the parents act as examples. They are, in any case, the first candidates. Parents ought to make use of that fact.
The most important thing is that the parents live in such a way as they also expect from their children. That implies that the life of the parents is

not hidden from the children. Beyond that, there is hardly anything. Of course, sometimes measures have to be taken simply to keep the household functioning. But when it is a matter of bringing up a child to be an adult who is able to give content to his own life and carry responsibility, that depends to a very great extent on the example the child is given.
Children primarily take their parents as an example – up to puberty. Afterwards they discover the outside world, and begin to look for examples in other people. Sadly, nowadays that is often pop idols and image-figures. They identify themselves with others, dress like them, imitate their gestures. In our days this has gone seriously off track with particular youth subcultures. We will not go into that now, but we should understand how a human being grows up and becomes adult.
The intention is that we, on the one hand, allow ourselves to be taught – as every child must be taught. With us, as children of God, that happens through the Word which is implanted in us. That Word then determines our thoughts. It shapes our frame of reference. We can only think about things we know; therefore we must know something, otherwise there is nothing to think about. On the other hand, we need examples – people with whom we may identify.
For the purpose of our upbringing as children of God unto sons of God, we are taught in the truth as such – preferably as broadly as possible, according to our ability. Then we are given examples. The loveliest collection of examples, in my view, is Hebrews 11. For we were speaking about the salvation of the soul – the salvation of our own selves. Hebrews 10 also speaks of that. We are to live by faith and not draw back from it. By faith in, and thus faithfulness to, and submission to the Word of God – the Word of life.
The apostle ends chapter 10 with: “we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.” (Hebrews 10:39) That is exactly the same theme as here in Philippians 2. Then comes the question: how does one live by faith? That is not to live according to prescriptions – that would be to live by Law. Living by faith means letting oneself be taught by the Word of God. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.” (2 Timothy 3:16–17) After that, the whole next chapter is filled with examples: Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets. It is demonstrated what these people did by faith in their lives – how they lived by faith, and how God used them. For some, that had joyful consequences during their life on earth; for others, certainly not. At the end of the chapter some very sobering examples are also mentioned. Whatever the outward consequences, the point is that one should live by faith.
After that there is no guarantee that we shall have a comfortable life, though undoubtedly we shall have a blessed life, whatever the circumstances. There is nothing that gives so much joy – that is, deep satisfaction – as serving the Lord. Ultimately one will be rewarded by the

Lord Himself. One will “obtain a better resurrection”, one will receive “recompence of the reward”. That is repeated several times in chapter 11, and also several times at the end of chapter 10.
Here in Philippians we do not find such a long list of Old Testament figures as examples of living by faith, but we do find several very important examples. The first is the Lord Jesus Himself, then Timothy, then Epaphras, and then Paul himself. The first and the last are especially striking, because both stand as patterns for the Church. The Lord Jesus we know as our Head, our Example, the One whose life we have received. The other we know as a type and example of all who were afterwards to inherit salvation (1 Timothy 1:16).
The idea in Philippians 2:19 is that the Philippians would also be of good comfort when they understood how it went with Paul. The Church is one whole, and so the Philippians might well be anxious about Paul’s circumstances. That is why he writes to them, so that they may be of good cheer when they hear that it is well with him. Paul, for his part, says that he is sending Timothy, and that it is the intention that Timothy should return with good news from Philippi, so that all may be of good cheer.

Philippians 2:20
For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state.
Paul is looking for someone who truly has that same mind which was in Christ – who has the same attitude, and is therefore of good courage, so that he is trustworthy for this work. Paul says he has no one else like that.
The thought is that overseers or elders do not have dominion over the flock, are not “the boss”, but on the contrary should “feed the flock of God… not by constraint, but willingly… of a ready mind”, as Peter says. (1 Peter 5:2) It is about that mind here as well: the disposition to care sincerely, without ulterior motives, without side-tracks, for their interests and to serve them. He explains it in the next verse:

Philippians 2:21
For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s.
So this is a problem for the apostle Paul. Here, and in other places, we find words of similar tenor, such as: “all they which are in Asia be turned away from me” and “Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.” They all seek their own advantage instead of serving the Church – the very Church of which they are supposed to be servants. That proved to be problematic around Paul and in his immediate circle – but in our days, on a smaller scale, the problem is much the same.
In those days this office of overseer was seen as a position, even a profession – a role by which one could make a living. That is the respectable version. What the apostle is saying is that they exercise that office in order to benefit themselves. Not for the good of the Church, but at the expense of the Church.
The Lord Himself, as here Paul, had the same problem in Old Testament times. He regarded the leaders of Israel as shepherds of the flock, but in practice they fed themselves – and then devoured the flock. The same thing occurs in the New Testament. In 2 Corinthians 11 the apostle even

reproaches the Corinthians that they put up with it gladly. They let themselves be abused by their own leaders, and choose leaders who "smite" them in the face, who exploit and devour them.
The apostle Paul points out this danger. Peter also mentions it when he addresses the fellow-elders in 1 Peter 5. Paul puts it very simply here: "they all seek their own". They are out for their own interest, while their very work and responsibility is to seek the good of the Church.
Paul describes himself as "servant of Christ" on the one hand – that is, slave – but his service as such is the service of a minister. That is not a slave, but refers to the work that he does. Paul says that he is a minister of the Church. Not a slave of the Church, but a minister. He serves the Church, in the service of Him who has appointed him.
Philippians 1 opens with: "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ", and later in Colossians 1:24–25 he says of the Church, "whereof I am made a minister". He performs a service for the benefit of the Church, in the service of God. The overseer – that is the New Testament term – stands in the service of God, but his work is to serve the Church. The position of an overseer always carries the danger of abusing circumstances: not serving the interest of the Church, but serving his own. That danger is always present.
Paul's problem is that he can send no one but Timothy. Timothy, however, cannot yet go, because he is still occupied. Paul could send others, but they are all seeking their own interest. They are not to exercise dominion over the flock (1 Peter 5) – over "God's heritage" – but are to be examples to the flock. Timothy is therefore also an example for us, and afterwards Epaphras is as well.

Philippians 2:22
But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father,
he hath served with me in the gospel.
That son is Timothy; the father is Paul. His "proof" is called the proving of his faith. That means that it cannot have been easy for him to stand in this work, to serve alongside Paul. But Paul says that he has passed that test, and he considers him reliable. He does indeed seek the things which are Jesus Christ's, and not his own.

Philippians 2:24–25
But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.
25 Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellow-soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.
That was what he himself would most have liked to do. The man is writing from prison, and was evidently convinced that within a foreseeable time he would be released. In any case, he sends Epaphroditus. It is not at once stated why, but the Philippians are assumed to know that exactly.
We read it later in chapter 4:18: "But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God."

Epaphroditus had been sent from Philippi to Paul in his imprisonment, to provide him with what was needed. That is what is meant here in 2:25 by “your messenger”—it is actually the same word as “apostle”. Paul evidently received support from various places; from Philippi in any case. And concerning this Epaphroditus it is now said that Paul is sending him back—apparently with this epistle, to deliver it.

Philippians 2:26
26 For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick.
It does not say that Epaphroditus had been anxious about his own life. He was anxious about the Philippians, who had sent him out. He would probably have preferred that they had never heard there was something wrong with him. Now Epaphroditus is distressed because the Philippians are, in all likelihood, distressed.
That is no small thing. He is worried because he fears being, in these circumstances, a burden to the Philippians. That is unselfishness. He is seeking the welfare of the believers as such. He is evidently a servant of the church who does not worry about himself, but under all circumstances only about the Philippians. And then it goes even further:

Philippians 2:27
27 For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.
We do not know what exactly was the matter, but that it was not just a minor ailment is clear from what follows. The apostle Paul also experiences it, for himself, as a blessing that God has shown mercy to this man Epaphroditus and restored him. How that happened we do not know; whether it was by a miracle, we do not know either.
What is said, is that this man had taken great risks, through which he became sick, “nigh unto death.” Whatever precisely it may have been.

Philippians 2:28–29
I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.
29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation:
It is about joy in the service of the Lord under all circumstances. We should always be conscious that we can serve the Lord, even if we are lonely, even if we are shut in. It is always possible, whatever the circumstances. And therefore there must, in some way, be joy—because of what one can do.
Sometimes I think this is precisely what distinguishes us as Christians from the natural man. We always have good courage; we always have hope. The meaning of our life is always this: that we should magnify the Lord in our life.
Feelings of joy and sorrow are, to a large extent, determined by the things we know. We know the Lord and we learn to know Him from His Word. The

more we come to know Him—and that is what Philippians 3 is about—the more we can also love Him. If one loves Him, one will also want to serve Him; and there is nothing that gives more joy than that. It comes ever closer and becomes ever more one's own: joy over the love for Him whom we have not seen, but whom we know from the Word. He reveals Himself to us, makes Himself known to us, and that awakens love. Without love there can be no service.
The service of the overseer in general is directed to that same joy, for it should rule and be strongly present among the believers. Where joy is lacking, something is fundamentally wrong. That holds true under all circumstances.
That sorrow of Paul would also have been the concern of the Philippians. The point is joy—even though we, as believers, and thus also the Philippians, are not only to believe on Christ, but also to suffer for Him. We are to bear a serving task and a serving responsibility, and may well take great risks. Yet they are to rejoice precisely in that.
Joy and happiness are directly connected with the satisfaction we find in life. There is nothing so satisfying as being allowed to serve the Lord. Each one of us may and can do that. That is precisely what is to give content to our lives, and bring satisfaction, well-being, happiness and thus joy. Especially when it is difficult, it often gives all the more satisfaction—and therefore, in the end, more joy.

Philippians 2:30
30 Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.
I would have translated "not regarding his life" as "risking his life." It is, in fact, a stronger expression than "not regarding his life." He took risks, very consciously, in carrying the gifts of the Philippians over to Paul. That he came into dangerous circumstances seems clear enough.
It is a service of Epaphroditus to the Lord, and Paul sets this man forth as an example—without giving a detailed report of exactly what happened. Verse 30 does not speak of the work of the church, but of the work of Christ. The Philippians wanted to do something further for the apostle Paul, and Epaphroditus was to fulfil that. I think it is a beautiful example of how the life of a Christian in general ought to look—and in particular that of the overseer. It is about the work of the Lord, about the welfare of the church, of the believers. Our responsibility is that we should have a quiet and peaceable life, in order that we might serve one another—for the Lord's sake and for the sake of our spiritual growth. For this, Epaphroditus is set forth as an example.

Philippians 3:1
Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.
The apostle is aware that he is repeating the same thought, that he keeps saying "rejoice". He apologises for it, as it were, but he wants it to sink in thoroughly. There ought to be joy. Our message is, after all, the glad

tidings—the Gospel. If that does not result in joy, then there is something wrong either with the message or with our acceptance of it.
If you see people coming out of church with a straight, expressionless face, you can safely conclude that what was preached was apparently not a joyful message. It is often about man, and about what man—and the believer in particular—must all do in order to make himself acceptable to God. That is foolishness.
God has accepted us and taken us to Himself. That is what we are to live from; that is the glad tidings. He has made us able to serve Him. If there is one way that leads to glory, to the joy set before us, it is the way of humility, of service. “Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame.” (Hebrews 12:2) Throughout the whole Bible we find that principle. It is always the route—not only for the believer, but even for the natural man. Wherever one learns to be something for others, to serve and to set oneself aside, there one finds satisfaction, happiness and joy in life.
That is why this word “joy” occurs so often in this epistle, which in particular speaks not only of service, but also of suffering.

Philippians 3:2
Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.
If we were to translate this in modern language, it would be: “beware of the dog.” “Dogs” is used figuratively here, as a picture of evil workers.
In the Old Testament we find many examples of this imagery. In general, dogs in Scripture are a picture of the Gentiles. The Gentiles were the natural enemies of Israel. Therefore the Gentiles are used to keep Israel—the flock—together by the Shepherd, that is, by the Lord Himself. That is the function of the Gentiles, and it will also be their function in the future. The Lord will, in the future, gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem, to bring the people to repentance.
So far as the dog is a worker, he watches over the flock. We are dealing here with shepherd dogs. Dogs, basically, do about the same work as the shepherd himself—but, if all is well, with one important difference: the shepherd is the friend of the flock and often also its owner; the dogs are not by nature friends of the flock—quite the opposite. And precisely therefore they are used for that work.
When a dog becomes vicious, he kills the sheep. Dogs have something against sheep, and conversely the sheep are afraid of the dogs. Therefore dogs are trained to run their circles around the flock. In that way they keep the flock together. Not the shepherd keeps the flock together, but the dogs—the enemies of the sheep. The shepherd leads the flock, goes before it. That is why, in Scripture, he is called “leader” or “guide”. He is to bring them to food, to green pastures. Our Chief Shepherd does that. Dogs are thus used for the benefit of the flock.
By “dogs” are meant here “evil workers” or “evil shepherds” (see also Isaiah 56:10–11). It appears, also in many other passages, that the evil worker, the false teacher, in practice departs from unfeigned faith. Where there is no trust in the Word and in the promises and in the work of God

upon us and in us, law is preached. Then man is put to work for his own improvement—and often also for the improvement of his leader.
With “Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision,” the apostle Paul becomes very blunt. It is certainly not polite to call the Jews—whom this apostle elsewhere usually designates by the term “the circumcision”—here “the concision” (i.e. the mutilation). The translators have rendered it well. The idea is not “circumcision” but “mutilation”—that something has gone wrong with the circumcision, figuratively speaking. Something is wrong where the law rules. “Concision” therefore has to do with a wrong application of the law—where the application of the law gets out of hand.
The apostle explains elsewhere how it is with that law. There is absolutely nothing wrong with the law itself; on the contrary, provided we use the law lawfully (1 Timothy 1:8). The lawful use of the law implies that you and I, on the basis of the law, are not under the law. With the law in our hands we can say that we do not live under it. Why not? Because we are “dead to the law”. We have, through the law, died to the law (Galatians 2). In accordance with the law we are dead—and the law has dominion over a man as long as he liveth (Romans 7:1). Therefore we are not under the law.
Then there is still the line of reasoning in Romans 3. There it is set forth that sins in general have received a righteous recompense in the Lord Jesus Christ. The sins of the world have been judged in the flesh of the Lord Jesus Christ, whom God hath set forth “to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness.” On a perfectly righteous and lawful basis the punishment for our sins has been borne, and the debt we owed has been paid. According to God’s lawful accounting, we have no debt, and we receive, on the basis of faith, life.
Do we then make void the law through faith? (Romans 3:31) God forbid. On the contrary, we establish the law. We are not against the law; quite the opposite. There is a righteous basis for our salvation—for the actions of the supreme Judge—when He does not impute sins and iniquities. He says: “The case is dismissed.” There once was a debt, but it has been paid. That is what Paul says.
If, after that, people still lay the law upon believers, Paul very irreverently calls this “the concision”—mutilation. Then something is completely wrong with the circumcision.
Originally this often concerned evil workers of Jewish background; in our day it is just as much Gentile. It has all become religion and religiosity, with the law in the hand—as if God had an interest in it, or we had. One must fear that only the leaders have an interest in it.
We are not to see to it that none fall short of the law, but that none fall short of the grace of God (Hebrews 12:15). Because these human attempts at self-improvement are such a stubborn matter, the apostle Paul at times uses very strong language.
In verse 2, then, three terms are used to denote false shepherds. What is remarkable is that the apostle does not even use the word “shepherd”. He evidently tries to avoid it—perhaps because they are not true shepherds. That is how I read this verse. And I have a good reason, because in verses

4–7 the apostle Paul does exactly the same: he tries to avoid one particular term. The word he would have to use, but explicitly does not use, is “Jew”. What he says there is that he has counted all his Judaism and his Jewish background loss—but he does not use the term. In the same way, in verse 2 he speaks of dogs, evil workers, the concision, whereas he might just as well have said “the circumcision”—but he leaves that out. In this case he even adds why…

Philippians 3:3
For we are the circumcision,
which worship God in the spirit,
and rejoice in Christ Jesus,
and have no confidence in the flesh.
We are the circumcision, not they. We, who worship God in the Spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh. The apostle gives here the symbolic meaning of circumcision. For it is a sign. In Genesis Abraham receives the sign of circumcision. It is afterwards said to be the sign of a covenant – not of the covenant of the Law, but of the covenant with Abraham. Therefore it must have a figurative and spiritual meaning.
That spiritual meaning of circumcision is given here. In circumcision the flesh is cut, the covering is removed, and that which is normally hidden is revealed. That is exactly what the apostle is saying: we are the circumcision – we, who worship God in the Spirit (that which is normally hidden), and who rejoice in Christ Jesus (who is also hidden), and who do not trust in outward things, in the flesh. That is linked to 2 Corinthians 4, where the apostle says:

> 2 Corinthians 4:18
> “While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen:
> for the things which are seen are temporal;
> but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

If one has that attitude – worshipping God in the Spirit, rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and not trusting in outward things (no confidence in the flesh) – then one is circumcised. In the Bible that is called “circumcision of the heart”:

> Romans 2:29
> “But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly;
> and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter;
> whose praise is not of men, but of God.”

Where circumcision is the cutting away of the flesh, the outward part, and the revealing of hidden spiritual things, it is a picture of death and resurrection, or of new birth. Circumcision has to do with the bringing forth of new life; it is connected with procreation.
In that connection we read:

> Colossians 2:10–13
> 10 And ye are complete in him,
> which is the head of all principality and power:

11 In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands,
in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:
12 Buried with him in baptism,
wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God,
who hath raised him from the dead.
13 And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh,
hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses;

Take note: not the circumcision of Jesus (which took place eight days after His birth), but “the circumcision of Christ” – that is, His death and resurrection.

Circumcision is a picture of death and resurrection, of putting off the old man and putting on the New Man. Abraham understood that sign; for when later it is discussed what Abraham actually believed, Paul says in Romans 4 that he believed that:

Romans 4:17b
“…God, who quickeneth the dead,
and calleth those things which be not as though they were.”

That is resurrection from the dead – the bringing into being of new life. God will bring forth a New Creation. As a sign of these things He gave Abraham the sign of circumcision. The old – the visible world – passes away. A New Creation from God takes its place. This is illustrated in the begetting of Isaac by Abraham, who was “as good as dead”, and by Sarah, for whom “it ceased to be with her after the manner of women”.

The thought is that those who cling to the Law are actually not circumcised at all – for they cling to the old creation, with its Old Covenant. They cling to the old man, to this present evil world.

Romans 2:28–29
28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly;
neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:
29 But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly;
and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter;
whose praise is not of men, but of God.

He speaks of an inward, hidden circumcision – a circumcision of the heart, or in the spirit. That explanation of circumcision is found already in the Old Testament:

Deuteronomy 10:16
“Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart,
and be no more stiffnecked.”

Our heart does not literally have a foreskin. So it means: cut away your foreskin – that is, your heart. The heart is the seat of faith, and circumcision of the heart means that our faith should not be directed to visible, outward things. One should believe “with the heart” (see

Deuteronomy 30) in the Word of God, in unseen things. Where we do that, we are truly circumcised – not with the type, but with the fulfilment.

> Deuteronomy 30:6
> "And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart,
> and the heart of thy seed,
> to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul,
> that thou mayest live."

That is a statement about the New Covenant, as it will be established. More literally it speaks of the future conversion of the Jewish people, of Israel as such. It is about the New Covenant over against the Old, and therefore these things are at work in our days in the Church as well.

> Jeremiah 4:4
> "Circumcise yourselves to the LORD,
> and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah
> and inhabitants of Jerusalem:
> lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it,
> because of the evil of your doings."

With that we have had Law and Prophets. The call here is to come to faith: to serve the Lord in the Spirit and not to trust in the flesh. We are circumcised, not merely because we are believers, but because we have received new life. Much more has been cut away from us than was ever possible in the Old Testament.

Philippians 3:4

Though I might also have confidence in the flesh.
If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:

He did, as to the flesh, actually have quite a bit to "show". Even today, among Christians, the idea often circulates that the real Christians are the Jews who have come to faith – that they are the chosen people, and that we ought to receive our instruction from Jews in general. That is heard both in more orthodox and in freer circles. If we must be instructed in Biblical truth, then preferably by a Christian with a Jewish background. There are even those who push all responsibility away and claim that we cannot properly teach the Bible at all; for that, we should go to the Jews. So people are full of admiration for someone who appears to be Jewish, often for no very clear reason.

I have nothing against the Jews – on the contrary, I have something with them, whether they are believers or not. The best Bible teachers I know from the last 100–150 years were indeed Jews: Christians who, from Judaism, had been converted to the Lord Jesus Christ. They did not call themselves "Messianic Jews"; they called themselves Christians, for that is what they were.

Yet the apostle wants nothing of those Jewish advantages. If there was one good Bible teacher, then it was this Jew, Paul. If there was anyone who understood the Scriptures, and demonstrated it, it was this apostle. We might say: that came from his Jewish background. But why then does he himself say that it was not so? We can imagine it that way, but Paul

contradicts it. In the flesh, it may have meant something; in the Spirit, absolutely nothing.
Moreover, he does not fail to point out on occasion that in that Judaism he held a prominent position – but at the same time he was a persecutor of the Church. That is mildly expressed; for the Lord said to Saul: “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” (Acts 9:4) He was a persecutor of the Lord. You can hardly call him a believer, or say that he was well taught. He may have sat at the feet of Gamaliel, but he did not learn many good things there. Generally speaking, he was on the wrong track. Instead of serving the Lord and the Church, he persecuted them – and he says: “I did it ignorantly” (see 1 Timothy 1:13).
Afterwards he says that he might have boasted in what he had learned before his conversion, in the flesh:

Philippians 3:5
Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;
Paul was a Jew, not a Mohammedan. Muslims did not yet exist, and they are not circumcised on the eighth day, but in the thirteenth year. “Of the stock of Israel”: that is, a Jew. Everything that is not Jewish is also not Israel – at that same earthly level, at least.
The term “Israel” is a confusing term; you cannot simply say what it is, for that depends on the context in which it is used. Words mean nothing in themselves. Only when they stand in a sentence, in a context, do they acquire a specific meaning.
What is a “chair”? It depends. If a chair stands by a table, it is a thing to sit on. But if you drive through the north of Friesland or Groningen and you see a “chair” by the road, it is not something to sit on – there is a bell hanging in it. Then it is a bell-frame. A “chair” is simply a structure that carries something: you can sit on it, or hang something in it. So you do not know what it is until the word stands in a context.
The problem with the term “Israel” is that people understand by Israel the Jewish people. On earthly terms, at present, that is so. But we are Israel, because we are the circumcision, because we are the chosen people in our days. We are “a royal priesthood, an holy nation” (cf. 1 Peter 2:9). In the higher sense of the term Israel, meaning “the people of God”, we are that.
But on the earthly level, where descent and inheritance-law play a role, the Jews are Israel. And there are still others who descend from Abraham, but are no longer called Israel – that is, the ten tribes who were scattered and will be gathered in the future. They are not Israel now. Since they went into captivity, they lost title, name and right to the name. They are not Israel, and are therefore called a Gentile nation, and are designated “Lo-ammi” in the Bible (Hosea) – “not my people” – right up to our days.
There is much confusion about this. We already noted earlier that all real confusion goes back to the question: What is the Church? Is the Church Israel, or is the Church not Israel? You cannot answer that simply. It depends what you mean by Israel. Only then can you decide whether the Church is that, or not. That is the difficulty.

There is an astonishing amount of confusion about it, including about when the Church actually began. That is directly connected with the definition of Israel and the Church. They are not necessarily two completely different things. “Israel” is the name given to the people of God. But all nations are, in a sense, of God, for there is only one God. Israel is the name given to that people which God chose for Himself as a peculiar possession, that it might be His royal and priestly people.
The ten tribes were removed from that position first, and became Gentiles. Since then they have not been called by the name of Israel, but by the name of Isaac – they are called “Saxons” (sons of Isaac), or “the people of Omri”, named after the father of Ahab. They received other names, because they are not Israel.
On the same principle, the Jews of today are also not Israel, for they too have been set aside from office. So far as there is a natural Israel on earth, we have the Jews on the one hand, but we must not forget the other ten tribes. When, in the future, the Church has been removed and Israel will again, on earth, be set in the royal and priestly position – then definitively – it will not be just about the Jews, but about all twelve tribes of Israel. In that Israel, the Jews are only two of the twelve tribes.
In the highest sense, if there is a people that may rightly bear the name Israel, it is the Church. We are that royal priestly people in our days. “I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people” and “I was found of them that sought me not” (Romans 10). In Romans 11 the apostle says that he hopes to provoke the Jews to jealousy, while two verses earlier he has said that a Gentile nation would do that.
The point is that Paul does **not** see himself as a Jew at all, and here he does not even want to utter the word. Insofar as he was a Jew, he walks round it with a wide circle and then still says: “I counted it loss.” Paul does not see himself as a Jew, but as a Roman – as a Gentile who brings the Gospel, in the first place to the Jews, in order to provoke them to jealousy. He says that in Romans 11, after having said twice, just before that, that it would be Gentiles who would do this. The fact that he then has the boldness to say that he is going to do it, can only be because he regards himself as a Gentile. He calls himself “the apostle of the Gentiles”. That phrase is usually read as if it only meant that he was sent to the Gentiles; but it actually means: a Gentile apostle – a Gentile who is an apostle. That was the great difference between him and the other apostles. He was a Gentile. He preached the Gospel everywhere, but primarily to the Jews. That is simply a historical fact. Wherever he went, he always went first into the synagogue. Even if, in the event, not so much the Jews but the Gentiles came to faith, he still went first to the Jews. He, as a Gentile, brought the Gospel to the Jews. That people saw him as a Jew was, in earthly terms, entirely understandable. As a man in the flesh he indeed saw himself as a Jew, but as an apostle he is “apostle of the Gentiles”, “teacher of the Gentiles”.
Paul completely distances himself here from his Jewish background. He does not only say that he has put it away; he says: I counted it damage. It is loss, because he knows that as long as he holds on to that, he cannot

gain anything. He counts it loss, that he may win Christ. His Jewish background only stood in his way in that respect.
That does not mean that this is so in exactly the same way for every individual Jew who comes to faith. A Jew in general does not come to faith because his Jewish background stands in his way. For most Jews who have come to faith, as far as I have been able to trace it in past times, it was true that they thereby completely distanced themselves from Judaism. Not that they forgot it, nor that the knowledge they had could not still be used; but the whole package, as such, is regarded as a burden.
The Jewish background is 100 percent legalistic. Every action – everything – is prescribed. If you put your trousers on, you must put one leg in first and then the other, and you may not reverse them. That is prescribed. I am not allowed simply to shut my Bible and put it down upside down; the front cover must always be uppermost. There are regulations for everything. I may not even pick it up just like that, for I must first go and wash my hands. Everything is prescribed. That is Judaism.
If you say there are Jews who do not have it so strongly, that only means that they are not so strongly Jewish. Where people think everything revolves around rules and regulations, where one lives under such a compulsion neurosis, the message that we are free in Christ does not only fail to find any entrance – they simply cannot do anything with it. They cannot live that way, for then they would suddenly have to choose for themselves what they ought to do. That is why it does not work.
They are focused on self-improvement. The Gospel says that we are free to do and to leave what we will – but that we ourselves bear responsibility. In practice, that responsibility is avoided. That is why they do not come to faith: because there is no room for it.
I once read a statement by a well-known rabbi. He had given a lecture at a gathering of Jews and Christians. He compared Judaism and Christianity and finally said: Christianity begins with the Messiah; Judaism ends with Him. By that he means: Christianity is based on the fact that the Messiah has already come. What characterises Judaism is that it is waiting for the Messiah. But he said that Judaism ends with Him.
We must fear that this is entirely in line with the Word of God, and that all Jews will indeed once become Christians. It means that Jews will at some point have to become Christians – namely, when the Messiah comes. As long as one insists on maintaining Jewish identity, the Messiah is not welcome. For when He comes, Judaism ends. That is entirely Scriptural. But since they are not willing to let it end, the Messiah is not welcome.
Why does a Jew not come to faith? Because he does not want to give up his being a Jew. In this we also see illustrated how blinded Judaism is. This statement is 100 percent basic Biblical truth and they do not even see it. They repeat it, they talk about it, and it does not sink in.
In our days the thought is still popular that especially those with a Jewish background have the necessary authority to tell us how it should and should not be. The apostle resists that, not only here, but also in other letters. On this occasion he says that, when people appeal to their Jewish background, he can speak from experience as well. And so he does.

He had done that already earlier in the second letter to the Corinthians, where his position as apostle is extensively under discussion, and where he is evidently placed over against others, particularly those with a Jewish background. I even think – although his name is not mentioned – over against the apostle Peter, with his emphatically Jewish background, which unfortunately now and then resurfaced. Paul goes into this at length. In that argument he says:

> 2 Corinthians 11:22–24
> Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I.
> Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I.
> 23 Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more;
> in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure,
> in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft.
> 24 Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.

The apostle Paul shows both how much he is a Jew, and how much trouble he has had with the Jews in the course of time. Whether that is really a recommendation is another matter. That list continues a while, and is a useful supplement to the exposition in Philippians 2 and 3, because the apostle immediately mentions there that it was also given to him, by grace, in the cause of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for Him – also in the more negative sense of the term. In these things too, he in no way falls short of others; quite the contrary.
He puts it even more sharply in Galatians 1:

> Galatians 1:13–14
> 13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion,
> how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:
> 14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation,
> being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

It is the same line of argument. It is about the preaching of the Gospel – the reign of Grace – over against any supposed reign of the Law. By Jewish standards he had every reason to boast about his manner of life in Judaism. If anyone could base a claim on his Jewish background, way of life and merits, then in the first place it was Paul. Only, he says that it means absolutely nothing. Repeatedly he says that he has counted it but loss and dung, that he may win Christ.
In Paul's judgement – and his own history confirms it – one has nothing in one's favour by being a Jew; on the contrary, one has a much bigger step to take. It is a hindrance rather than a help for a person to come to submission to the Lord Jesus Christ and to receive that saving grace of God, which hath appeared unto all men, Jews included (Titus 2:11).
So when the apostle in Philippians 3 speaks of his Jewish background, he says that, as to the flesh, he can boast more than they can. In 2 Corinthians 11 he calls it foolishness to do so – and of course it is.
That "circumcised the eighth day" just belongs with it, because Jewish proselytes were circumcised much later. Not as children, but when they joined Judaism. In addition, there were the Ishmaelites, later followed by

the Muslims, who were also circumcised much later. Someone who is circumcised on the eighth day is born a Jew.
But we have already read just before: “We are the circumcision, and they are the concision.” That was the lead-in to this passage. Paul comes from the tribe of Benjamin. That is fairly rare, because it was only a small tribe – yet it was Jacob’s beloved son and Joseph’s beloved brother.
The expression “a Hebrew of the Hebrews” literally means “one from beyond, from the other side”. Heber is the same word as “over”, or also “ford”: a crossing or wading place through the water. So “Hebrew” means the same – from the other side. And in religious terms he was, purely and strictly, a Pharisee; that is, orthodox.

Philippians 3:6
“Concerning zeal, persecuting the church;
touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.”
Paul was, in practice, ready to go very far to defend Judaism by persecuting the Church, and thus to be “blameless” according to the standards of the Law, “the righteousness which is in the law”. Taken all together, you could simply call that “Jew”. Yet it is remarkable that he does not actually use the term, and he must have a purpose in that.
The reason is that it illustratively fits what he has just been setting out. If, in seven points, he says “I am a Jew”, then he adds that, for Christ’s sake, he has counted it all but loss and dung. He distances himself from it. I think that is the reason why he does not use the word. He does not want, as it were, to have anything more to do with it.
I have not collected all the passages where the term “Jew” is used in connection with the apostle Paul, but I am aware that there are quite a few. It is usually so that people call Paul a Jew, and he does not deny it. He also makes use of it, if only by speaking boldly in various synagogues which he visited on his journeys. So he certainly allowed it to be applied to him.
However, he never based a claim on the fact that he was a Jew. Strangely enough, he did invoke the fact that he was a Roman. That rests on entirely different principles, quite outside Judaism. So it may well be that the apostle says, on the one hand, that he is a born Jew, while on another occasion he can say that he is a born Roman. That is written in black and white in Scripture. He could make use of both. On what basis Paul was a Roman, we do not know, except that we must conclude that his father also had Roman citizenship – although his father is called a Pharisee, and therefore a Jew. So the same story plays there.
Our problem is that we often have preconceived ideas about the apostle. We see him as a fanatical Jew, small of stature, and we also know him as the man who, on his missionary journeys, brought the Gospel to the Gentiles. We therefore see the Jew who brings the Gospel to the Gentiles. But on closer examination, although that is not wrong, it is indeed a misunderstanding, a preconception that is not supported by the Bible. It is true in a way, but it is a thought-pattern developed outside the actual statements of Scripture. You can find it back in the Bible, but if we work carefully – comparing Scripture with Scripture and weighing things – we

shall see that the apostle does not regard himself in the first place as a Jew who brings the Gospel to the Gentiles, but as a Gentile who preferably brings the Gospel to the Jews. That is literally the other way round. Because this is not generally known, I keep returning to it.

Peter was a Jew who brought the Gospel to the Gentiles. He says:

> Acts 15:7
> "Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago
> God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth
> should hear the word of the gospel, and believe."

That is what Peter says – and Paul was present there – after Peter had just returned from his first journey to the Gentiles (Cornelius etc.). Paul, too, brought the Gospel to the Gentiles, and more, and in greater number. When the problem arises from that – the question whether the Gentiles also have to live under the Jewish Law – he is the first person to answer. He then says:

> Acts 15:10
> "Now therefore why tempt ye God,
> to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples,
> which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?"

That was Peter. Paul, however, comes in from quite a different angle. He comes, as a Gentile, to bring the Gospel to the Jews – even in Acts 15, there in Jerusalem. He came from Antioch to report to Jewish believers in Jerusalem about the Gospel that he preached and about the consequences of it. That is so important that he repeats it again in Galatians 2:

> Galatians 2:2
> "And I went up by revelation,
> and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles,
> but privately to them which were of reputation,
> lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain."

Here we have the "Jew" from Antioch, going up to Jerusalem to set forth to the believers of the assembly there the Gospel which he preaches – primarily to Jewish believers. That remains so throughout.

When the apostle sets out the essence of our dispensation in Romans 9–11, you simply cannot, on any honest reading, come to any other conclusion but that Paul classifies himself with the Gentiles – with believers from among the Gentiles, at any rate.

The difficulty is that Romans 9–11 is quite a complicated argument, which people usually digest only slowly, because there is so much in it. As a result, one easily loses the thread. That is always a risk when we work through a passage verse by verse and dig deep; we can lose the thread – and that certainly happens there, not least because of all the preconceptions that also exist about that section.

One key issue in Romans 9–11 is exactly this: what is the Church? That is what those chapters are about – what the Church is, and what it is not; and, on the other hand, what Israel is. What is the difference between the Church and Israel, and why are they nevertheless identical, despite the differences? That is difficult, but it is so.

The whole point is that the believers of today are, according to Romans 8, destined to firstborn-sonship, to adoption. We are being instructed, brought up, unto sonship; we shall receive, in the future, the glory of the sons of God. We are to be conformed to the image of God's Son, and thus to receive firstborn rights. With that are connected kingship and priesthood.

Now, if we as believers of today are appointed unto sonship, how is it then with Israel? For we thought that Israel was called to sonship. Paul answers in Romans 9 that this is so indeed – but then it becomes complicated.

> Romans 9:2–4
> 2 That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.
> 3 For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:
> 4 Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises;

Even here Paul avoids the word "Jews". He has something against that word, just as he does in Philippians. To them belongs the adoption as sons, yet in chapter 8 we read that we have "received the Spirit of adoption" (vv. 15, 23). Likewise in Ephesians 1:5 we are told that in Christ we have been predestinated unto the adoption of children. And so Paul is saying that this adoption was indeed originally destined for Israel—for his brethren according to the flesh, for the Jews. That was certainly the case at the beginning, but the question is: to what extent are the Jews (still) Israel? That is the very matter that is now expounded, and it comes down to this: where there is unbelief, and therefore no walking in the footsteps of the faith of Abraham, a person can hardly lay claim to the title "Israel", nor can he expect to be called to sonship. If one does not follow Abraham in his faith, how then can he be his heir? Inasmuch as Israel, the people as such, is distinguished from the other nations precisely and especially in the first place by that sonship—and therefore by priesthood (the whole of Israel was called to be a royal and priestly nation set apart from the rest of the nations)—how can that people function as God's servant, as priest, if it itself does not believe, but on the contrary rejects? And so the Lord said through Hosea to Israel:

> Hosea 4:6
> 6 My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.

This was not spoken to the priests alone, but to the whole people. Israel—the Jewish people—has disqualified itself, and the priestly office is now being given to another people. That was not unexpected, for it is already announced in Deuteronomy 32, which is quoted in Romans 10. God had long before foretold that Israel would be unbelieving, after which He Himself would give that priestly office to another people. That other people may then lay claim to the title "Israel". By earthly standards it is officially not Israel; it is a Gentile people.

--Deuteronomy 29:29

29 The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.

This concerns the secret things of our present dispensation—of the suffering that would come upon Christ and the glory that would follow afterwards. Moses says that God does not wish to reveal the secret things. Yet they would indeed be revealed one day.

--Ephesians 1:9

9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

Those secret things are precisely that mystery. Deuteronomy 30 speaks of Israel's future conversion; that still has to take place. But before that happens, there is mention of secret things. That refers to our present dispensation. Without revealing them at that time, they are nevertheless spoken of.

Deuteronomy 31:16

16 And the LORD said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them.

That covenant was not yet forty years old, for they had not yet entered Canaan. The covenant largely concerned the time when they should have come into the land. Yet before they even enter the land, God already declares that they will forsake Him. Paul says that from that moment the covenant is old and waxing aged, and nigh unto vanishing away (Hebrews 8).

Deuteronomy 31:17

17 Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us?

That is exactly how the epistle to the Romans begins. God has given the world over—first of all Israel, but thereafter the nations also. The Jews almost literally say the words above, for the Jews are obliged to give a set answer when asked why so much misery and persecution has come upon them: "Because we have no temple." That is the same as: "because our God is not among us". They have no temple, and therefore the Lord does not dwell in their midst. Hence their longing for a temple, preferably in Jerusalem. That is precisely what stands here, together with the reason why the Lord has forsaken them—namely, because they first forsook Him. They hide themselves from Him, and therefore He hides Himself from them.

Deuteronomy 31:18

18 And I will surely hide my face in that day for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods.

The word translated “surely” should be rendered “hiding concealingly”—a Hebraism.

> Deuteronomy 32:16
> 16 They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger.

Note the combination “provoked to jealousy” and “provoked to anger”. To provoke to jealousy is the same as to provoke to jealous zeal.

> Deuteronomy 32:17–18
> 17 They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not.
> 18 Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee.

Paul later speaks of demons. They despised the Rock, rejected Him; nevertheless that Rock is become the head of the corner (among other places, Acts 4:11). Still a temple matter, but that is a side issue.

> Deuteronomy 32:19–21
> 19 And when the LORD saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons, and of his daughters.
> 20 And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith.
> 21 They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities: and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.

The word “faith” in verse 20 is the same Hebrew word translated elsewhere as “faithfulness” or “belief”. We have here jealousy (or wrath) in verse 16, and then again jealousy (or jealous zeal). They would be moved to jealousy by a people that is not Israel—a Gentile people, Lo-Ammi. When “Am” is used, it is normally translated “people”, but in reality it almost always refers to Israel. When Scripture speaks of a people in the sense of “not Israel”, the word is “Goy” (Gentile/nation). Here, however, it is “Am” and translated “not a people”, yet it carries the meaning “not my people”. They provoked God to jealousy with that which is not God; He will provoke them to jealousy with those who are not a people. What else can this mean than that unbelieving Israel would be set aside by God, removed from office as God’s royal and priestly people, and that the kingship and priesthood—in short, the priestly office of the firstborn—would be given to another people, namely a Gentile people? This verse is quoted by the apostle Paul in Romans 10. Here in Deuteronomy 32 there is an exchange between two peoples. That exchange is already pictured in the well-known examples of Ishmael and Isaac, Jacob and Esau, Reuben and Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh, Solomon and Nathan. That is the very exchange that Romans 9–11 is all about. Jacob knew of it when it happened. And we usually think that when Isaac had to pass on the blessing of the firstborn to his eldest son, he was deceived by Jacob and Rebekah. From a human point of view that was to some extent the case. But we know that Isaac said it felt like Esau, yet the voice was the voice of Jacob. What must he have thought? Isaac was always resigned—that was

the most conspicuous feature of his character—so we think he simply accepted it. But that was not the case. Hebrews 11 says that by faith Isaac blessed Jacob. He knew what was happening. He simply did not think it necessary to say so. He let it happen, but he knew what he was doing. Of Jacob it is recorded that when he blessed Ephraim and Manasseh he guided his hands wittingly and even said that he knew what he was doing.

One people is put in the place of the other, so that the other may be made jealous of the one. In Romans 10 Paul deals with this matter and asks the question: Did Israel not know this? They could have known it.

> Romans 10:19
> 19 But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you.

Here he quotes Deuteronomy 32. A foolish or senseless nation—Lo-Ammi—is a nation that does not have the law. From a Jewish standpoint they are the ignorant, the senseless.

> Romans 10:20
> 20 But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.

This verse Paul takes from Isaiah 65:1. It has even come to pass that the secret things have been revealed to those who did not even ask for them—a Gentile people. To Israel He says (so that those of verse 20 are in any case not Israel):

> Romans 10:21
> 21 But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.

Of the Lord Jesus it is written that He endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself (Hebrews 12:3), which is also an allusion to these statements. An unbelieving Israel would be provoked to jealousy by a Gentile people, a foolish people that has not the law. That can only be if the latter is a believing people. That is the exchange.

> Romans 11:11
> 11 I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.

Was it God’s intention that they should stumble? By no means—but it was extensively foretold in the Old Testament. There can therefore be no doubt that the Gentiles are that “no people” of Romans 10:19. We have a Lo-Ammi, not God’s people, a foolish nation, a senseless nation; here is a Gentile nation that would provoke Israel to jealousy.

> Romans 11:12–14
> 12 Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?
> 13 For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:

14 If by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh, and might save some of them.

The apostle has just set forth at length that the Jews would be provoked to jealousy by a Gentile people. That he, as a Jew, should now provoke the Jews to jealousy—does that not contradict everything he has just said? That, after all, was what the Gentiles were to do. It must be perfectly clear that when he says, “if by any means I may provoke to emulation them which are my flesh,” this must be understood in direct connection with the provoking to jealousy spoken of in verse 11, with chapter 10:19, and with Deuteronomy 32:21. Paul does not regard himself here as a Jew at all, but as a Gentile. He, as a Gentile—he, as a Roman—hopes, as a Roman, to provoke to jealousy some of his flesh and so save them. That is also why he calls himself “the apostle of the Gentiles.” On that basis we must read the expression as “Gentile apostle.”What is “King of the Jews”? Surely that means Jewish king? What, then, does “apostle of the Gentiles” mean? Simply “Gentile apostle,” does it not? You may object, “But was he not the apostle who brought the Gospel to the Gentiles?” Yet if one person above all others is to be singled out for that work, it was not Paul, but Peter. When Paul says “the apostle of the Gentiles,” it means that he himself is a Gentile. The thought is that Paul calls himself the apostle of the Gentiles—which means Gentile apostle—and carries out his ministry as a Gentile. He does so as a Roman, and thereby distances himself from his Jewish position, exactly as we have already seen in Philippians.

If we read chapters 9 to 11 superficially, we think it is simply a matter of either the Jews (under the name Israelites) or the Gentiles. But if we read more carefully—especially in the light of the reference to Deuteronomy 32—it is not merely a twofold division. It is not simply Jews and Gentiles, but rather the Jewish people (the people of Israel), alongside another Gentile people, and only then the (remaining) Gentiles. It concerns in particular one Gentile people, according to Deuteronomy 32. There it does not say, “I will provoke you to jealousy by the Gentiles,” but “I will provoke you to jealousy with those which are not a people” (Deut. 32:21)—that is, it is not “Am” in the sense of “the people of God.” One people—a Gentile people. Here too it says “by a foolish nation.” Not by the nations (plural), not by Gentiles in general, but by one Gentile people. And that is Ephraim, the ten tribes of Israel. That is a Gentile people. That would bring forth its fruit.

The Lord told the parable of the wicked husbandmen (Matthew 21). A certain householder planted a vineyard and let it out to husbandmen. When the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to receive the fruits of it, but the husbandmen refused to deliver the fruit of that vineyard to him. He sent his servants (the prophets), and finally he sent his son, the heir, in the hope that they would reverence him. But the husbandmen said, “Let us kill the son and seize the vineyard for ourselves.” Those were literally the words of Caiaphas, who said, “Let us kill that one Man, and then we shall keep the people.” They caught the son, cast him out of the vineyard (the camp, Jerusalem), and slew him. The question now was what the lord of the vineyard would do to those evil husbandmen, and the answer was: he will miserably destroy those wicked

men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, who shall render him the fruits in their seasons. Then the Lord said: the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. The Pharisees and scribes understood that he spake of them, and they sought to lay hands on him. They were the wicked husbandmen—but who are those other husbandmen to whom the vineyard is let? The difficulty is that if you say “the Church,” there are still a few problems. The Church did not yet exist at that time.

In the parable of the vineyard (Matt. 21), who are those “other husbandmen / another nation” to whom the vineyard and the kingdom will be given?
Because: “the Church” wasn’t there yet – so what did the Lord mean?

1. The parable of the vineyard – transfer of the kingdom
In Matthew 21 the Lord tells the parable of the vineyard:

- God (the Lord of the vineyard) plants a vineyard = Israel (compare Isa. 5).
- He leases it to husbandmen = the leaders of Israel.
- He sends servants (the prophets), they are beaten and killed.
- Finally he sends his Son (the Heir).
  They say: “This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.”
  They cast him out of the vineyard (outside the camp, Jerusalem) and kill him.

Then Jesus asks:
“When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?”
Answer (from their own mouths):
“He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.” (Matt. 21:41)
And Jesus concludes:
“The kingdom of God shall be taken from you,
and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.” (Matt. 21:43)
So we have:

- The old husbandmen = unbelieving Israel’s leaders (pharisees etc.).
- The vineyard = sphere of God’s rule and testimony on earth.
- The other husbandmen / another nation = a new people who will bring forth fruit.

The scribes and Pharisees understood He spoke of them (Matt. 21:45). Their stewardship as God’s outward people is being removed.

2. “Another nation” – not “all Gentiles”, but a specific people
Your text has just shown from Deuteronomy 32 and Romans 10–11:

- God would provoke Israel to jealousy:
  - By “no-people” / “not-My-people” (Lo-Ammi) – a people that is not officially His covenant nation.
  - By a “foolish nation” – a nation without the law, in Jewish eyes.
- That is not just “the Gentiles in general”, but a particular Gentile people God Himself raises up in place of Israel’s failed priesthood.

In Deut. 32:21:
“I will provoke them to jealousy with those which are not a people;
I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.”

Paul applies this exactly in Rom. 10:19–21 and Rom. 11:11, 13–14:

- Israel rejects.
- Salvation goes to the Gentiles.
- Purpose: to provoke Israel to jealousy.

So, in the parable language:

- The vineyard is not destroyed;
- The tenancy is transferred to "other husbandmen" – a new people who will bear fruit.

That's the same transfer Deut. 32 and Rom. 10–11 talk about.

3. How does that fit with "the Church wasn't there yet"?
When Jesus speaks in Matthew 21, the Church is indeed not yet historically formed (Acts 2 is still future). But He often speaks proleptically – in view of what will follow His death and resurrection.
So:

- In its prophetic sense, that "other nation" is the company that will:
  - arise after His rejection and resurrection,
  - be composed largely from the nations,
  - receive the stewardship of testimony, priesthood, and fruit-bearing,
  - and thereby provoke Israel to jealousy.

That is exactly what Paul calls:

- The election from among the nations in Romans 9–11.
- The "no-people / not-My-people" who are now called "My people" (Rom. 9:25–26, quoting Hosea).
- The royal priesthood, holy nation of 1 Peter 2:9–10, where Peter applies Hosea's Lo-Ammi language to the (mostly Gentile) believers:

"Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God;
which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy." (1 Pet. 2:10)
That is exactly Deut. 32 + Hosea + Romans put together.
So while historically the Church is not yet present in Matthew 21, the Lord is describing the future transfer of the kingdom's stewardship to:
A new, believing people – drawn largely from the nations –
who will be God's priestly, royal people in the present age.
In the highest sense, that is what your author has been calling:
The Church as "Israel" in the highest sense – the royal priestly people.

4. Where does Efraïm / the ten tribes come in?
He hinted earlier that:

- The ten tribes (Efraïm) became Lo-Ammi ("not my people"), scattered among the nations, effectively a heathen nation.
- Prophetically, their restoration and the calling of the nations run together. Efraïm stands typologically for a Gentile people that yet bears Israel's name and calling.
- That background explains why a heathen company, drawn from the nations, can still bear the titles:
  - "My people",
  - "sons of God",
  - "royal priesthood",
  - "holy nation",
  - and, in the highest sense, "Israel".

So, this "other nation" of Matthew 21 and the "no-people / foolish nation" of Deut. 32 / Rom. 10–11:

- doctrinally = the present company of believers (the Church),
- prophetically tied to Efraïm / the ten tribes (a lost, heathenised Israel),

- practically = the heavenly people who now bear the testimony that Israel on earth has forfeited for the time being.

5. Back to Philippians and Paul himself
All of this was a long detour to support the point you saw in Philippians and Romans:
- Israel, “to whom belongs the adoption” (Rom. 9:4), has forfeited that calling in unbelief.
- We, believers in Christ, have received “the spirit of adoption” (Rom. 8:15) and are “predestined unto adoption” (Eph. 1:5).
- In the highest sense, we are that people – that “other nation” – to whom the vineyard (the kingdom stewardship) is leased for now.

And therefore Paul can say in Philippians:
- “We are the circumcision…” (Phil. 3:3) – the true, spiritual Israel.
- He, though a born Israelite, counts all his Jewish credentials as loss, that he may win Christ and be found in Him (Phil. 3:7–9).
- He does not stand before God as “Jew” but as member of that new, heavenly people – the “no-people” whom God made His people.

That’s why, in Romans 11:
- He speaks to the Gentiles,
- calls himself “apostle of the Gentiles” (in effect: a Gentile apostle),
- and says that he, as such, hopes to provoke his flesh (his kinsmen according to the flesh) to jealousy.

So the flow is:
1. Israel – called to sonship, priesthood, kingdom.
2. Israel in unbelief – set aside; called “Lo-Ammi”, “not my people”.
3. God raises a new people (from the nations) – given adoption, priesthood, kingdom stewardship.
4. That people is, in the highest sense, “Israel” now – we are the circumcision.
5. Through that people, Israel after the flesh will eventually be provoked to jealousy and brought back.

If those husbandmen—the Jews—had come to faith, what fruit would that have borne? Christianity, the Church. Judaism ends at the coming of the Messiah, and at the coming of the Messiah Christianity begins. From that the Church or the Kingdom ought to have arisen—first the firstfruits, then the rest. If the vineyard is given to another nation that does bring forth fruit, what then is the fruit? The Church, of course, for that is what it was all about. The first Gentile nation that accepted Christ and Christianity was the Britons. And because the Old Testament says that Ephraim would be the first, we may conclude that this is Ephraim. That is a very different route from the British-Israel movement. On certain points it arrives at exactly the same conclusion, but this argument is far stronger than any archaeological or historical argument.
Suppose that other Gentile people is that part of Israel which became Gentile 2,500 years ago, and Paul, reckoning himself as a Gentile, belongs to those who would provoke Israel to jealousy—does Paul then belong to the ten tribes of Israel? In a sense, yes—and he has already said so, namely in:

Romans 11:1
I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.

He said the same thing in Philippians. What has Benjamin to do with it? What is the function of the tribe of Benjamin? The division of the kingdom in the past—into what we call the two tribes and the ten tribes—was in reality somewhat different. Both David and Solomon were tribal heads, first and foremost of the tribe of Judah. From there they exercised kingship over their own tribe. David first reigned seven years over his own tribe Judah alone, and then thirty-three years over all the tribes of Israel. That separation always existed: the royal tribe Judah, and alongside it the other eleven tribes.

When Solomon died, Rehoboam was to succeed him. He announced his kingship with the declaration that he would first increase the taxes. The burdens would be made heavier, said the king of the Jews, and through the Jews over all Israel. The people of Israel rebelled against this. They sent the government packing and appointed another king from the tribe of Ephraim, from Joseph—the tribe that held the birthright—namely Jeroboam. Rehoboam sent the people away and said, “Come again in three days.” They returned on the third day, so we see that “in three days” is the same as “on the third day.” Rehoboam then expressed himself so coarsely that the translators have not even rendered it. The gist is that he would make the burdens far heavier.1 Kings 12:19
So Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day.

Eleven tribes withdrew from that royal house of David, from Rehoboam—except his own tribe, which had somewhat closer ties. Rehoboam therefore became king not over Israel, but only over his own tribe. As far as Israel was concerned—that is, properly the whole people—they chose Jeroboam as king. That was in accordance with the will of God and with the promises God had already made beforehand to this same Jeroboam. Israel fell away from Judah. Thereafter you have two peoples: the tribe of Judah and the rest of Israel. But who is now called Israel? The rest of Israel, and not Judah. When Scripture henceforth speaks of the Israelites, it does not refer to the tribe of Judah. They are precisely not Israel. The other tribes are Israel.

Only after those other tribes had been carried away into captivity and had disappeared among the Gentiles, and after they had lost the name Israel, did the Jews finally claim the title Israel for themselves as the sole remaining heirs. That is possible, but it is second best.

We then establish that theoretically we have been speaking of one tribe over against eleven. Levi does not count, for they dwelt scattered among the other tribes; otherwise we should have had thirteen tribes. There would therefore have been a division between Judah, who remained with Rehoboam—the house of David—and the other eleven. The Lord had already announced this beforehand and promised it as a blessing to Jeroboam of Ephraim. He said to Jeroboam in advance:1 Kings 11:30–32
And Ahijah caught the new garment that was on him, and rent it in twelve pieces: And he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of

Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee: (But he shall have one tribe for my servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel:)The man (the "he" of verse 32) already had one tribe, and if another tribe is given to him, one tribe is added to Judah. That tribe is therefore not split off. Judah accordingly receives one extra tribe as a blessing for the sake of the promise to David —the smallest one, namely Benjamin. So in the end it was a division into ten and two, instead of eleven and one.
In 1 Kings 11 the division of the kingdom is announced beforehand while Solomon was still alive. It is announced to Jeroboam, Solomon's favourite from Ephraim, and thus the bearer of the birthright in Israel: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Ephraim, Joshua, and then Jeroboam. He becomes king over all Israel. That is what is announced here. Part of Jerusalem—namely the temple area—lay in the territory of Benjamin.

Philippians 3:7–9
7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.
8 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,
9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:
Paul regarded the things that had been gain to him (verse 7) as loss, in order that he might win Christ. That is a fairly relative concept. The things he reckoned as loss are those he has just listed, which without exception have not so much to do with his worldly background, but with his religious background as a Jew. He considered these as loss, in order that he might obtain gain.
Verse 7 begins in Greek with the word "gain", and verse 8 ends with it. The intention was that Christ would be his gain, that he might have part in the life of Christ. Not in a fundamental or merely doctrinal sense, for that he already had long before. Every child of God has part in the life of Christ, is raised with Christ and seated in the heavenlies. We read that throughout all the New Testament epistles, beginning in the epistle to the Romans.
Here it is about the practical outworking of that reality, in practical life – that is, in the soul of the believer. We, who are children of God, ought to be changed from glory to glory, to be conformed to the image of the Son of God, in short, to grow up to sonship and be trained for that and gain the necessary experience.
That is what is called "experience" in Romans 5. We ought to acquire experience in order to be placed as sons and to receive "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (verse 14). The point is, it is not about our own manner of life as such, and certainly not about a walk according to the law, as the apostle says in verse 9. We ought to have a righteousness which is through the faith of Christ. This expression links directly to the language of Romans 3, where it is said that in the Gospel the righteousness of God is revealed, which has been brought about by or

out of the faith of Jesus Christ. A righteousness that comes unto all and upon all them that believe.
That this is not merely a fundamental, doctrinal truth, but also a practical one, is then explained, at least at length in Romans 6. There it is said that we are dead to sin and to unrighteousness, and made alive with Christ; that we should live unto righteousness and also serve righteousness. It is about that righteousness. Not the righteousness that consists in the forgiveness of our sins and our eternal salvation, but the righteousness that is brought about and expressed in our practical life.
That is the issue here, and that is certainly not the same as the righteousness of faith by which we have become children of God. It concerns the practical outworking of that righteousness in our lives, in what we do and how we live – in our walk, and thus in our soul. That is also what the apostle then says: it is “the righteousness which is of God by faith.” Why did he regard these things – and especially these religious matters – as loss and dung? In order that he might win Christ.

Philippians 3:10
That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;
It says, “That I may know Him.” This is then explained in three points. We ought to know Christ, namely:

1. the power of His resurrection,
2. the fellowship of His sufferings, and
3. being made conformable unto His death.

These are three aspects, yet they continually come down to the same thing. Here, however, it is easy to lose the thread, because when one hears of “the power of His resurrection”, one usually thinks of an historical event in which that power was at work once, and no longer afterwards. But that is a mistake.
The “power of His resurrection” is that power of which he wrote in:

> Ephesians 1:19–20
> 19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,
> 20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,

That power we ought to know. Of it, it is said that it is a power which works toward us who believe. It is not a power that once worked upon us when we were born again, and then ceased, but one which still works in us. That power began to work in us then and now continues to work in us with the same strength. It is the life-power of Christ. Of course, it is the power by which He rose from the dead, but it did not end there. That is the life which still works. What we have received is eternal life, the life of Christ. That life is meant to be lived. That is the purpose of the bringing forth of life: not only its origin, but the subsequent working of that life. That is what the apostle is addressing here. Where that power works in us, we are conformed to the image of God’s Son, so that He might be the firstborn among many brethren (Romans 8). There that power is called the Spirit – the Spirit of God, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of sonship – the

Spirit who leads us to our placement as sons. Where that Spirit works in us, we are made like unto the image of God's Son. In 2 Corinthians 3 it says that we are transformed from glory to glory into the same image. And Romans 12 says we are to be transformed by the renewing of our mind, of our thinking. We are actually to become different people in our thinking, in our view of the world.

We have here no continuing city, no abiding position. We live as strangers in this world and shine as lights in the world, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Therefore we suffer, we are rejected and we bear reproach. But we are also moved and motivated by other forces which take hold of us. We have the power of His resurrection, through which we can do and actually do things that we by nature neither can do nor would do. That is the power of His resurrection working in us positively, but it automatically brings with it the fellowship of His sufferings. That is the natural reaction to it.

We ought to stand differently towards things. Matters which are important to the old man are often no longer important to us; and things for which the old man has no interest at all are of the utmost importance to us.

"Being made conformable unto His death." In Romans 6 it is written that the Lord Jesus Christ is "dead indeed unto sin once". Strangely enough, the verse is often read as though it said He died once because of sins, or the words "unto sin" are omitted altogether. Yet the key of the verse – and thus the foundation of the whole chapter – is that He died once, not so much because of sins, but unto sin. That is what the chapter is about. It begins with the question: "Shall we continue in sin?" The Lord Jesus died once, and that means: once for all. That remains so. Not that He is dead, for He lives. The point is that He died unto sin. "In that he liveth, he liveth unto God." He died once unto sin and He lives unto God.

The old expression "unto sin" may sound difficult to us, but the other clause is simple: "in that he liveth, he liveth unto God." He lives to serve God. If it says that He died unto sin, it means that He no longer serves sin. I am not saying that He ever did, but the statement is that He cannot and never will.

The same applies to His resurrection and His appointment as High Priest, and to His offering as High Priest. Of these also it is written that they are once for all. The meaning is that it happened once and will never be different. We have to conform ourselves to it, to submit to it and to live out of it.

It may be somewhat difficult to set this out with regard to the Person of the Lord Jesus, but we know that we are reckoned to have died with Christ, to have been buried with Christ, raised with Him and seated with Him in the heavenlies. Are we dead? The answer is yes. Death and life are relative terms. They have to do with whether or not there is a relationship. Death means no relationship; life means that there is a relationship. Life is fellowship; death is separation.

We are dead, still, just as the Lord is. We are dead unto sin. For we have part in His death. That remains so and never changes. He is still dead to the world – and so are we. Once, and for ever. In that He lives (Romans 6),

He lives unto God; and in that we live, we live unto God, in order that we might serve God.
“Being made conformable unto His death” therefore means that we should not concern ourselves with the world, that we should not be involved in specifically worldly matters. We are in the flesh and are therefore dependent on fleshly things. But being involved in the world (this present evil age) is nowhere required and need not be. All this lies first of all, as Romans 12:2 also implies, in our thinking. World-conformity does not lie in our outward conduct as such, but in our mind. To a large extent we may do the same outward things as the natural man does; but since we experience them differently and see them differently, we are nevertheless different and not conformed to the world. Some imagine that world-conformity consists in the way we dress, or the like.
In Philippians 3:10 it is not primarily about physical suffering – although that is often a consequence – but about emotional suffering, inward suffering, sorrow. One will share in that. If one is not made conformable unto His death, has no fellowship with His sufferings, then one will also not share in the power of His resurrection in the practical life. That prize of the high calling of God will also not be received. What crown can there be if one does not run the race?

Philippians 3:11
If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.
Quite a few wild theories have been built on this verse. That then continues into the following verses, so that what “the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” is becomes entirely doubtful. Many lose the thread well before verse 10.
The point is the truth concerning the present work of Christ. I am inclined to repeat this every time because I have noticed how unknown this theme is. It is about the good work that God began in us when we were born again.
If you ask what the Lord Jesus means for us, in most cases the answer you get is that He died for our sins. That is a very tragic answer. In the first place because it gives the impression that He is still dead, and in the second place because it is a complete denial of the present work of Christ. That He lives people do know, although they do not usually say that straightaway in such an answer. They simply do not understand what it means for us that He lives after He has died, after He has accomplished the purging of our sins.
It is therefore no longer about what He has done for us, but about what He is now doing in us and upon us. That is, in fact, what this whole epistle speaks of. It is the theme of all the New Testament epistles.
It is about not only being a hearer of the Word, but also a doer of the Word and of the work. Paul uses here the expression translated “if by any means” –which means “in some measure”. A hundred percent is not possible; he does not aim at that either. It is about an outworking of the life of Christ in the apostle Paul. One hundred percent is impossible, but he is seeking after it.

On the one hand we take it as fixed that we shall rise; on the other hand we say that we have already risen. So what then is the apostle speaking about? When we look at the Greek, we find there a word that is not used in this way anywhere else. It is not possible to compare it with another Scripture passage. “Resurrection of the dead” in this verse could literally be translated as “out-resurrection from the dead”, but that is awkward. The translators therefore had to make a choice.
The normal word for resurrection is here preceded by the preposition “out of”. What the translators have done is not so bad: they have let the word resurrection be preceded by a preposition in their own language. “Resurrection from the dead” (or “rising again from the dead”) is not wrong. It is a resurrection out of the dead, and nothing changes if it were translated “out-resurrection from the dead”. Nothing changes even if it were rendered simply “resurrection from the dead”.
Resurrection from the dead can always be understood as “resurrection from among the dead”, but all one has then done is to translate one preposition by two: “from” and “among”. Sometimes I myself translate it even more fully as: “resurrection from among the rest of the dead”. Not that this is literally in the text, but that is the sense: it is not the general resurrection, but a resurrection from among the dead. Paul is not speaking here of the bodily resurrection. It is about having part in the power of His resurrection – practically sharing in the resurrection-life of Christ.
To the extent that we share in that life, we have part in the resurrection of that one Dead One, and thus in a resurrection from among the other dead. For in truth it was only One, and the others remained in death. Even if that “out of / from among” were not there, nothing would actually change. A word does not derive its meaning from the dictionary. It has no meaning as long as it does not occur in a sentence, in a context. The meaning of a word is determined by its context, not by its etymology, or by how it is formed, but by the connection in which it appears. Certainly in the Bible, where the context is very clear, and the composition of the passages, the manner of construction, is so clear that I know of no better examples.
One of the problems we often encounter is that people philosophise on their own, develop their own theories and then try to undergird them Biblically. They try to find Bible texts that confirm their own theory. That is the wrong approach. Isolated texts can easily be taken out of the Bible, torn from their context, and used to support a man’s own theory.
One of the theories about verse 11 concludes that it concerns the Last Day. “Resurrection from the dead” is then made to refer to the rapture of the Church, and “out-resurrection from the dead” to a part of the Church which is taken up first and only afterwards the rest. Another theory is this: the believers of this dispensation, as far as glory is concerned, wait for what we call “the rapture of the Church”. A small exception to this would then exist, namely the “out-resurrection from the dead” of those who die now and immediately receive all their glory in heaven. Some would therefore already be glorified, while the majority await glory in the future. For this there is but one text, this verse in Philippians 3:11. But this verse does not speak of that at all. It is not about bodily resurrection here.

Philippians 3:12
Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.
It concerns something he might grasp while still living here. So it is not about bodily resurrection, but about the spiritual application. We are taught at length that we already now have part in the resurrection of Christ (Ephesians 1, a parallel letter to Philippians, probably written around the same time), and that we have part in “the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead” (Ephesians 1:20). The point is that this power would actually take hold of us, and that we, as born-again ones, as children of God, as firstfruits of a New Creation, would practically walk through life in that way. That is clear from the whole context.

> 2 Corinthians 5:14–15
> 14 For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead:
> 15 And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

“Not I, but Christ liveth in me.” That is the whole matter. That we put off the old man, with his former way of life, and put on the new man, “which is renewed in knowledge” (Colossians 3:10). It is about the outworking of the resurrection-life of Christ in our practical life (2 Peter 1).
Paul has not yet received this fully, according to verse 12 – but in part, of course, he has. When someone says that he is perfect, or when it says that someone ought to be perfect, it means: mature.
We are dealing with two different things. There is perfection according to the spirit, and perfection according to the soul. The one concerns our standing (spirit, position); the other concerns our state (practical condition). The one is about who we are; the other about how we are. In the epistle to the Romans, chapters 1 to 4 speak of how we were – sinful, circumcised and/or under the law. From chapter 5 onwards it is about who we are; how we were, and who we now are because we are raised with Christ. Then the rest of the section deals with the practical consequences. Colossians 2 says that we are complete in Him, in the sense that in Him we are children of God; in Him we share in Christ and in His fulness. The intention is that this perfection should work out in practice. That means that we should no longer serve sin, for we are dead to sin. Nor should we serve the law, for we are also dead to the law. We live under the reign of grace. We ought to serve righteousness instead of unrighteousness in practical life – the outworking of Christ in us. We are holy, and therefore we ought to be holy in all manner of conversation. We are perfect, and that ought to be expressed in our life. According to the spirit we are perfect; according to the soul we still have to become so. That is what matters for children of God.
This happens through the mind of Christ, by which one on the one hand shares in the power of Christ, and on the other hand in His sufferings and in His death. Along the way of tribulation one becomes mature. Without

falling, one does not grow up. Without setbacks in life one would never become an adult. This is true both for the natural man and for the born-again man. We are trained by the setbacks of life. We learn to withstand them, to overcome them, and from that we derive our strength. The purpose is that we learn no longer to be “tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine” (Ephesians 4). That is maturity.
“I follow after” – I press on – is a strong striving for something. In the Bible the word pursue / hunt / press is often used, and usually in a negative sense, for example of Nimrod and of Esau. Nimrod is a model of the natural man in general: the striving in the world for more, for bigger – the working of leaven. Esau is a picture of the man in particular who lives under the law and does not receive his birthright – the Jewish people living under the law. It applies to those who can glory in the flesh, circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin or of Judah, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the Church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. Then you have indeed been “pressing” very hard. Far-reaching ambition, springing from profound pride in the natural man.
Paul, however, presses toward something entirely different, and so the word is used positively. He presses on to “win Christ” and to that end he counts all the rest but loss and dung. He presses toward the “out-resurrection from the dead”, the outworking of the life of Christ in him. Paul seeks to lay hold of it, but for that very purpose he himself has been laid hold of. That is a good illustration of the concept of suffering. Suffering includes, among other things, that one is seized, or gripped by something. He says that he has been apprehended by Christ Jesus for this ministry which was entrusted to him. God has seized him because He wished to reveal His Son in him.

> Galatians 1:15–16
> 15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace,
> 16 To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood:

When one is called of God, it is always in order to be placed as a son. Insofar as the Son is revealed in the apostle Paul, to that extent he will share in that sonship to which he is called. Paul says that he has been apprehended by Christ Jesus in order to press toward that perfection, toward that resurrection from the dead. Here in Galatians 1 he says that he has been apprehended in order that God’s Son might be revealed in him. In practice, those two come to the same thing.
As the Son of God is revealed in Paul, so far he knows the Lord Jesus Christ and knows by experience the power of His resurrection, has fellowship with His sufferings and is made conformable unto His death. In this way, the concept “resurrection from the dead” in Philippians 3 is clearly explained.

Philippians 3:13–14
13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto

those things which are before,
14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.
He does not say that he has already attained, yet he nevertheless sets himself forth as an example. He seeks to understand it, and he urges them to do the same. He presses toward the mark.
White as a colour carries a beautiful meaning.
All light is considered to be white. Strictly speaking, white is not a colour at all; it is all colours blended together in equal measure. The various colours arise because certain aspects of the white are filtered out; what remains reflects or refracts a particular colour, and the reverse. Hence also complementary colours—each other's opposites. Colours in Scripture have a particular significance, and certainly white. White presupposes being the gathering of all colours, and is in reality multicoloured. Therefore one might associate it with the manifold wisdom of God, which, sadly, was lost in KJV in Ephesians 3, where it is said that the apostle Paul occupies himself with proclaiming the manifold wisdom of God.
If we pass the light through a so-called prism, it breaks into its constituent colours—the familiar colours of the rainbow. Officially seven colours, and that is as it should be. Thus he presses toward the white, reaching toward the things that lie before.
This is imagery. It means the white centre of a target—the bull's-eye. The white can be clearly seen; one can aim at it well. It refers to the goal, the objective. If one wishes to shoot accurately, one must not look back. The same applies to a child of God.
"Unto the prize of the high calling of God" is to be read alongside "unto those things which are before": twice the same thought. We often see this in the apostle Paul; he names a particular goal, and then repeats it in different words. What lies before us? What is there for us? Glory, sonship. Here it says "the calling of God." At the word "calling," we should ask: called unto what?
We are called to be placed as sons—no more and no less. We, as children of God, as firstfruits of His creatures, are called to be appointed as sons (Romans 8). That is what Paul pursues: that crown, that reward. He stretches forward toward the glory that shall be revealed in him.
"The prize" means the reward, the payment. He already partakes in the calling of God, but whether that calling will indeed be honoured remains the question. Will the prize truly be paid out? Will he receive that glory? We are "begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1:4). A newborn child does not inherit anything; it simply cannot. Therefore we should grow up in the faith and partake of this life of Christ, in order that we might also partake of His glory. It was intended that we should be clothed upon, not merely clothed. Some even run the risk of being found naked (2 Corinthians 5). We ought to stretch ourselves out toward being clothed upon.
To motivate us, the apostle points us to that goal, to the prize of the calling of God. What is done is done; we should now look forward. This

applies throughout the whole life of God's children. We can look ahead and stretch forward toward that heavenly prize of the calling of God. We should not expect honour or reward from men (John 5), certainly not from those who live under the law, but from above—from the Lord Himself. His honour we should seek, and from Him we shall receive honour.
Paul then says that we are to be his followers, that we should have the same mind and grow in the same manner.
Philippians 3:14 is an important verse, for it expresses what occupies the apostle Paul and what his own hope or expectation for the future is. The prize mentioned here is known to us from another passage. If translated more fully, the word becomes "honour-prize." The word itself appears in 1 Corinthians 9, where the apostle—just as elsewhere—speaks of a race to be run.

> 1 Corinthians 9:24
> Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

Here he speaks of the literal racecourse in connection with the Greek games. The honour-prize is the reward for running the race properly, according to the rules. That prize Paul strives toward. That is his goal. What exactly that prize is is stated afterwards, more or less, regardless of how one translates it, for there are several options. I am inclined to read it as "the prize unto which God has called us." For the believer is indeed called by God to attain this prize. This fits perfectly with what he already said in verse 12: "I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." Whether we are apprehended by Christ Jesus for that purpose, or called by God for that purpose, makes no practical difference. It is one of the usual expressions concerning our future destiny—concerning the glory promised us after running the race.
There are two expressions in Scripture that first apply here:
(1) We are predestinated unto…
(2) We are called unto…
In both cases the same word follows: sonship, or placing as sons—unfortunately rendered "adoption of children" in the KJV. We are called unto sonship, or predestinated unto sonship. That is stated explicitly in Ephesians 1. First it is said that God has chosen us before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him. Then follows:

> Ephesians 1:5
> Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will…

In the Greek there is but one word here: son-placing—appointment as sons, and thereby as heirs, as kings, as priests; in any case, unto glory, and that through Jesus Christ.
In Romans 8 it says that we should be placed as sons; we should be led to it by the Spirit. This appears several times in Romans 8:

> Romans 8:29–30
> 29 For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

30 Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.

The “to be” in verse 29 can also very well be read as “to become”. We are predestinated unto son-placement, to become conformed to the image of God’s Son, that He—Christ—might be the Firstborn among many joint-heirs. Many brethren, or, in the words of Hebrews 2, in the midst of many sons.

Verse 30 makes a slight distinction between the two expressions. Predestination is simply what God has done; calling is His making known that purpose to those for whom it is intended, and thus calling them. Both have the same thrust. Everywhere that calling is mentioned, it is always this calling unto sonship, glory, inheritance, crown, or whatever synonymous term is used.

Here it is called “the prize of the calling of God.” It is a prize unto which one is called; but one may also say that the prize is that calling—namely, the appointment as sons. That is the practical point: we are called of God unto this.

It says in verse 14, “the prize of the calling of God, which is from above,” but I personally prefer to translate it “toward above.” In practice it makes no difference. One must weigh these matters in translation. If it is “the calling toward above,” it means that our calling lies above; we are called to something that is above. We are also going upward, as the remainder of the chapter states. If one translates it as “the calling of God from above,” it means that we are called from above. Again, in practice this makes no difference. We are called upward, or we are called from above.

Many translators resolve it by rendering “from above” as “high”. Then the directional sense disappears; it is no longer a matter of toward it. Many translations therefore read “the high calling of God.” The high calling—in English. We are called to something high, and that it is in heaven we already knew; and that it is unto sonship and therefore unto inheritance is stated in many places.

Philippians 3:15

“Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.”

Here again, the word “perfect” carries the meaning of “mature.”

We ought to have the mind set forth in Philippians **2:5**: from that verse onward we are given the well-known examples of the Lord Jesus, Timothy, Epaphroditus, and then more extensively that of Paul—followed here by the summary. This mind, this disposition, has now been illustrated clearly enough. It ought to be our disposition during the days in which we are still “in the flesh”: a serving, humble disposition, so that in the future we may share in the glory of Christ.

Matters like these are not easily set forth in a doctrinally analytical way. It is about a disposition, and one either has it or one does not. There will no doubt be some who, when confronted with such things, will say they do not have this disposition. If all is well, it may yet come. That, at any rate, is the intention—and it is part of the work that God has begun in us and

that He will perform until the Day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6). That is actually the most beautiful expression for the rapture of the Church: the Day of Jesus Christ. “Day” means judgement, and therefore our manifestation before the judgement seat of Christ. That is His day, His hour; He awaits it. That disposition ought to be in us. In any case, we know that this is the Lord’s intention. God will reveal this to us, also through these words.

Philippians 3:16
“Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.”
The “we” and “us” here refer back to the same “we” of verse 15. The apostle acknowledges that some do not have such a disposition, but as far as we do have it, let us hold fast to it. “Whereto we have already attained” implies that this does not occur from one day to the next. Let us walk according to the same rule. It concerns a rule of life. Not only ought you and I to have this disposition, but we ought also to continue in it. Let us hold fast to that above all.
This same emphasis appears in many other passages of Scripture: it is often established that many believers indeed begin well, but do not continue well. One begins, for example, in the Spirit (as in Galatians) and ends in the flesh. One begins justified by faith and afterwards reverts to works. One begins with grace and then returns to law. One begins with humility and submission to the Lord, and then attempts to establish one’s own authority over the Church. Concerning this John says that the only thing we must do is to remain with what we have heard—to keep His words; to continue living from the Word of God, from the Gospel. The point is that we should be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord (1 Corinthians 15).

Philippians 3:17
“Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.”
We ought not to be followers of Paul only. Here the apostle speaks with striking modesty, for elsewhere he simply says: “Be ye followers of me,” but then adds, “even as I also am of Christ.” He first emphasises that he is a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.
Here he states it somewhat more broadly: “Be followers together of me.” Not only he is an example for the believers—there are others as well, and besides, this epistle was written by Paul and Timothy, so we have at least two examples. Peter says that Christ has left us an example, that we should follow His steps.

A note on “the prize of the high calling of God”
Where some read in this passage an allusion to the so-called rapture of the Church, that is far-fetched. The “rapture” as such—if one takes the word as literally as possible—is obviously not under discussion here. It cannot be, for we cannot press toward or reach after the rapture. Yet some believe it necessary that this verse refer to the rapture of the Church.

They reason that as the Church we really have only three, at most five, epistles in the Bible: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and perhaps 2 Timothy. They then lose the rapture of the Church, because it does not appear in those epistles. Not wanting to lose the rapture, they search eagerly for a text, and settle upon “the prize of the high calling of God,” toward which we are said to stretch ourselves.

From this, some conclude that not all believers of this dispensation will share in the rapture: one must strive for it; otherwise one will not attain unto it, will be left behind, and will pass through the Great Tribulation. If that were the case, the best one could do would be to die as quickly as possible. The whole notion that only part of the believers will take part in the rapture is therefore untenable. The rest would, as punishment for not being good enough, have to endure the Great Tribulation—something completely unbiblical, illogical, and unjust. The passage is not about the rapture.

The apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 11 that he delivered that which he also had received. It is passed on from generation to generation. We follow examples—not in the sense of doing exactly what they did, for we do not know precisely what occurred when the Lord instituted the so-called Lord’s Supper; Scripture tells us very little. Nor do we know exactly how those believers gathered, for there is scarcely a verse describing it. We are to be followers of those who have left us examples—not in doctrine, but in disposition. This works far better than law, for the imposing of laws deprives man of freedom, but when man can follow examples, he does so using his freedom. So it is with the children of God. We are not given laws, but examples. Our greatest example is of course the Lord Jesus. Thereafter, on the one hand Abraham, and on the other hand—specifically with regard to the Church—the apostle Paul.

As for Timothy, one need only read the two epistles addressed to him, and it becomes clear that Paul sets himself forth in a very high degree as an example for Timothy. When Paul bids farewell to the elders at Ephesus, he does the same again: he recounts what they already knew—how his ministry, conduct, and walk had been—and then admonishes them to take heed to the flock. But he presents himself first as their example.

Philippians 3:18

“For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:”

Notice what is not said. He does not say: “there are many who break the commandments,” or “who transgress my directives.” He simply says: “they walk otherwise.” They walk as though they were enemies of the cross of Christ. He speaks therefore of their disposition, not even primarily of their deeds—though that disposition is of course expressed in their actions.

If we take this verse as literally as possible, it amounts to this: every deviation from the apostle Paul’s example is, according to the apostle himself, hostility to the cross of Christ. It is starkly black-and-white: either one follows Paul, or one is an enemy of the cross of Christ—one or the other.

Let me begin with the final expression: “the cross of Christ.” He became the Christ in His resurrection, and that was after His crucifixion. Without the cross He would never have become the Christ. Had He not first been utterly humiliated, He would never have been highly exalted (Philippians 2:9). If we are to share in His glory, that can only be if we take up our cross. The Lord has left us the example of patience, of suffering. It was along that path that He came to glory, and therefore “the cross of Christ” is that cross by which He came to glory.

“Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.” (Hebrews 13:13)

A chapter earlier we read that He, “for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame.” Shame and reproach thus belong to the cross.

If one does not want that—and therefore does not do it; does not go out unto Him without the camp—then it is because one is, evidently, an enemy of the cross of Christ. One does not want that cross, that reproach. One wants recognition—not outside the camp, but inside it; in the world. There are only two possibilities: either we are in the present evil world, or we are drawn out of it. We walk either in darkness or in light. Of course there are gradations and compromises, but Scripture does not present those to us as legitimate options. We must choose. It is either in the camp or outside the camp; either under law or under grace.

There are several other passages dealing with this matter—namely, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ. Elsewhere it is said that they crucify the Lord afresh. If one simply passes by the cross as though it means nothing, then one acts as if it still lies in the future, as if it must be repeated.

> Hebrews 6:4–6
> 4 “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,
> 5 And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,
> 6 If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.”

This concerns those who began in the Spirit but ended in the flesh. They fell away. In 1 Timothy it is said that they “turn aside.” Of those who fall away—who let go or fall from the foundation—it is written that it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance. Such people know the message, but in practice choose another path. Nothing can be done; they choose worldly principles, thereby denying that we are dead to the world. In doing so, they crucify the Son of God afresh. He has already been appointed Son, but they simply deny it. The fact that He is the Son of God implies that He has judged the world. In His death He has officially brought judgement upon the world. If, as believers, one then continues to live according to worldly principles and places oneself in the darkness, this means that the Lord would have to be crucified again to deliver them anew.

The apostle has little hope for such people. They shall be saved, he says elsewhere, but so as by fire (1 Corinthians 3). As far as reward or glory is concerned, there is little to expect when one puts the Son of God to open shame.

Thus verse 18 says: either one follows the course of the Lord Himself, and is a follower of Christ and of Paul, or one is an enemy of the cross of Christ. That this truly concerns the minding of earthly things appears in the next verse.

In Hebrews 11 we find many examples of Old Testament believers set forth as examples for New Testament believers. Not regarding what they did—those things were all different—but regarding their disposition. Not that what we do is unimportant, but what is in the heart is more important. That is what the Lord beholds and will judge. We therefore have examples. For some that may be an uncomfortable term, but Christianity lives by tradition—by what has been handed down from the beginning: first by the Lord Jesus Himself, then by the apostles, and even by what has been passed down from the earliest pages of Scripture.

In Hebrews 11 we find many examples of Old Testament believers who are held forth as examples for New Testament believers—not with respect to what exactly they did, for all of that differed, but with respect to their disposition. Not that what we do is unimportant, but more important is what is in our hearts. That is what the Lord regards and will judge. We therefore have examples. For some this may not be a particularly pleasant term, but Christianity lives by tradition, by what has from ancient times been handed down—first by the Lord Jesus, then by the apostles, and indeed by what has been transmitted already from the earliest pages of the Bible.

Philippians 3:19

“Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.”

One might connect this with verse 14, where the apostle reaches forth toward the goal—the prize he hopes to receive at the awarding of the crown. In verse 19 he speaks of those who walk otherwise. Their end is destruction. Their god—the one they serve—is the belly. This refers not to the inward but to the outward man. The prize would be a crown of life, and destruction is obviously the opposite: death.

We ought to despise shame and bear reproach in order to be glorified in the future. But these—“who mind earthly things”—reach out in practice toward shame. The intention is that we should mind the things above (Colossians 3). The preceding expressions apply where one minds earthly things.

In Romans 6, two possibilities are also set before us. One is the serving of sin; the other, the serving of righteousness. Concerning the serving of sin it is written:

> Romans 6:20–21, 23
> 20 “For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.
> 21 What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now

ashamed? for the end of those things is death.”
23 “For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

The end—the result—of serving sin is death. Verse 23 repeats this. It is not merely the consequence of a sinful nature, as one is inclined to read the verse; it is the wages for serving sin. Nor should we immediately think here of physical death, for that befalls everyone. It is the working of death, or of destruction, already during life. While one serves sin, death is at work; it promotes corruption. It influences and pollutes our thinking. It has a wholly negative and destructive effect upon our being.

Concerning the opposite—that we are not slaves of sin but servants of righteousness—the latter part of verse 23 speaks. The problem with the verse is that it is usually read as though it teaches that a sinner dies, but that God by grace gives eternal life, and that we are called to accept that and come to faith. That is true in itself, but it is not the point of this verse. This verse is the summary and climax of the entire chapter.

The expression “the wages of sin is death” comments on the fact that if we continue in sin (v. 1), and thus in practice remain servants of sin, then destruction works within us and nothing else. It leads to nothing good, only to ruin.

Conversely, “the gift of God is eternal life” does not primarily refer to our receiving eternal life by grace. Those to whom the epistle was written had already received eternal life. The thought is that it is likewise the grace of God that we should live that eternal life—that this life should be active. Eternal life ought to be lived.

Paul writes in his farewell letter to Timothy: “Lay hold on eternal life.” Was Timothy then not yet born again? Of course he was. He was to strive to live that life. Paul says in Philippians: “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect.” Eternal life is not used there in the theoretical but in the practical sense. One should reach forth so that this life may truly be lived.

1 John 2:24–25
24 “Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.
25 And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.”

This is written to believers who had already received eternal life. They also have the anointing from the Holy One (v. 20), and in v. 27 it says: “the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you.” They are therefore regenerate people. The “us” in v. 25 refers to people who have already received eternal life. What has He promised us? That this life should also be lived, that it should be expressed, that we should be transformed into the same image of Christ. He has not only begun a good work in us, but will also perform it until the Day of Christ. So here too it concerns eternal life in the practical sense. It ought to be lived—that was the intention.

1 John 2:15

15 “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”
The flesh is set over against the things that accord with the will of God. The love of the Father is the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, whereby the hope is not put to shame. The love of God is in Scripture directly associated with the work that God does in us and with the result of that work for which we hope (Romans 5).
1 John 2:17
17 “And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”

Notice: “he that doeth the will of God.” That is what He has promised—that we should be able to do this; better still, that He should do it in us. This happens only if we remain with the Word which we have heard from the beginning. We began in the Spirit and ought to be perfected in the Spirit (Galatians). We should judge things according to Biblical, and therefore Divine, standards, not human ones.
Verse 20 in Philippians 3 could then be read as saying that we should not mind earthly things, but seek (mind) the things above, not those on the earth (Colossians 3:1**–2**).

Philippians 3:20
“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:”
The expression “our conversation is in heaven” corresponds closely to those first two verses of Colossians 3. Our citizenship (politeuma), our walk, is in heaven. We ought to seek—or mind—heavenly things. The Lord Jesus also said: “Seek ye first the kingdom of God” (Matthew 6:33). And where is the kingdom of God? Until now it is hidden in heaven—so the idea remains the same. We see that the Lord Himself began to proclaim these things. Afterwards they were confirmed to us by those who heard Him. Seek the things which are above, and all things shall be added unto you. We should not be anxious; the Lord knows what we need and will give it. Toward that we should stretch forth.
We are inclined—especially with the KJV Bible in hand—to say that although the term refers to walk, it should really be understood as citizenship. That is true, but if one translated it here simply as “citizenship,” it would be too theoretical. The term does not mean merely citizenship; it is more practical. It means that all our actions, all our behaviour, fall within the framework of that citizenship. It concerns our civil status and the conduct befitting it. It is one concept; therefore the translation “conversation” (walk) is by no means incorrect. We are citizens of the heavens, and there is our walk.
We live, in fact, in heaven, and are seated with Christ in heavenly places. As children of God we have become partakers of the kingdom of God—or the kingdom of Christ. But that kingdom itself is at present purely heavenly. It is not yet on earth, although we already belong to it, and in a very particular manner. We are now being prepared for our future role as members of the assembly of a world-empire—not only over the earth, but

over the whole creation. Our citizenship, our walk, our entire mode of life is in the heavens. Higher than the earth—that is the idea.
We then read that we from heaven expect the Saviour.

A clarification about expecting the Saviour “from heaven”
On closer inspection, it should strike us that, according to Biblical standards, we do not expect the Saviour from heaven. What we expect is that we shall go into heaven, not that He comes out of heaven—at least not at the moment of the rapture of the Church. We go to Him. There is a compromise view which holds that at the rapture He comes to meet us in the clouds. But this always stumbles over the expression that He does not come to meet us, but we go to meet Him. We go to Him, and afterwards we shall appear with Him in glory—but that is at least seven years later, at the end of the seventieth week of Daniel.
We do not expect the Lord from heaven for ourselves when we speak of the second coming. That event is not His appearing out of heaven, but our appearing in heaven. We go there.
The expression “from whence we look for the Saviour” means “on the basis of which” or “because of which.” “From” very often carries the meaning of “on the ground of,” as in “from this follows that.” From the one, the other proceeds. If our walk is truly in the heavens, then on that basis we look for the Saviour. The apostle does not say “your walk,” but “our walk.” He sets himself and Timothy as examples.
If we do not look for the Saviour to change our vile body, it is presumably because our walk is not in heaven at all. If our walk is in heaven, then we look for the Saviour.
The hallmark of the ministry of Johannes de Heer was the expectation of the return of Christ in general, and of our service as believers not under law but under grace. Hence the hymn (now removed from the hymnbook "Free from the Law, O Happy Condition", written by Philip P. Bliss in 1873. The full first stanza (or the most commonly sung version) is:
Free from the law, O happy condition,
Jesus hath bled, and there is remission;
Cursed by the law and bruised by the fall,
Grace hath redeemed us once for all. Once for all, O sinner, receive it;
Once for all, O brother, believe it;
Cling to the cross, the burden will fall,
Christ hath redeemed us once for all.
That was characteristic of his preaching—not broad in scope, but profoundly elemental and relevant throughout our whole dispensation: the expectation of reward, of crowns, of the Lord for us, on the basis of faithful service; our service under the New Covenant; and the expectation of the reward He will give.
Exactly these two things are found together in this verse: our walk is in heaven, and on that basis we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. In spirit we are already saved; in soul we are being saved now; and when He in the future appears to save us, that can refer only to the salvation of the body.

Philippians 3:21
“Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”
He will come to exalt, to change, our vile body. Another body will take its place. On the very spot where the one body was, suddenly the other body will be. This is the same as what will ultimately happen to the whole old world, as we read in Revelation 20: there earth and heaven flee away, and there is a new heaven and a new earth. That is a transformation. He takes away the old in order to establish the new (Hebrews 10), yet in the same place. The old is then absorbed into the new.
Especially in Hebrews 9 we find a beautiful illustration of this. The idea was that there was something old—the holy place—and behind it was something that was not yet opened. “The way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest.” When the veil is drawn back, when the veil is rent, the holiest of all is opened. The holy place then ceases to exist as a separate compartment. There is now only one place, and that is the holiest of all. The old is gone. That is why I also expect that, after the taking up of the bodies of believers, nothing of them will be found on earth.
In 1 Thessalonians 4 it says that “the Lord himself shall descend from heaven” etc., but that is at the end of the seventieth week of Daniel, after the three-and-a-half years of tribulation over at least the Jewish state. Then “his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives” and He will appear in glory (Zechariah 14). It then says that those who sleep in Christ shall rise first, before He descends. Together with them we who are alive and remain shall go to meet the Lord. The Lord will descend, but before He descends, we go to meet Him.
He descends at the end of the seventieth week, but we go to meet Him at the beginning of that seventieth week. The expression “the Lord shall descend” does indeed have to do with the rapture of the Church, but it is not the same moment. When the Lord descends, we descend with Him. Therefore we must first go to meet Him, otherwise we could not descend with Him.
It is obvious that these events are in the first place related to those matters which have long since been revealed in the Old Testament and which form the fixed framework for the sequence of events connected with the return of Christ. His descent, His appearing to Israel, is at the end of Daniel’s seventieth week (e.g. Zechariah 14). For ourselves personally, we first expect something different: we shall go to meet Him.

> Colossians 3:4
> “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.”

According to Biblical standards, He is manifested from the end of the seventieth week onward. Colossians 3 speaks of exactly the same thought as the end of Philippians 3: it concerns a way of life directed toward our glory and our appearing with Him in glory.
All misunderstandings about the position of the Church, the rapture of the Church and the second coming of Christ, arise from not recognising the

unity between Christ and the Church. Everything Scripture says about Christ, about the Messiah, from the first page of the Bible onward, is at the same time applicable to the Church. That is the meaning of “we are his body.” We have part in Him. There is indeed an order within that: the Head is greater than the Body, yet we share in Him.

This is summed up at the beginning of Ephesians 1: we are “blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” Then follows the list: chosen in Him, predestinated in Him unto sonship, and so forth. When Psalm 2 says, “Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee,” it refers to the Messiah, but just as much to the Church. The proof of that we find in Revelation 12. There, the same statements are applied to the child, the man child, that is born there—and that refers to the Church. After that follows Daniel’s seventieth week. It really is all there.

We are to have part in Him in every respect. When He comes in glory, He comes with the Church in glory. The glory we receive is not something automatic simply because we are children of God and have a heavenly destiny. It flows from our service to Him here and now.

What purpose would it serve to mention the rapture of the Church after such an extensive call to service, if it were only an appeal to service for as long as we are here, after which we are all changed and all exactly alike? If there is no distinction above, why should there be any distinction here? If we cannot suffer loss or receive reward, what motivation would there then be for our life here? In that case it would merely be a matter of waiting.

But we are not merely waiting for it; we are looking forward to it. We are also reckoning on it for the future. In view of that, we ought to serve the Lord. Our service to the Lord, our willingness to serve Him and, if need be, to suffer for Him, determines the reward we shall receive in the future. That is what we look forward to, so that there is a direct doctrinal and practical connection between our service here and the so-called rapture of the Church—which I prefer to call “our manifestation before the judgement seat of Christ.” That term expresses more clearly what it really is about. The more our walk is in heaven, the more we actually look for the Saviour who will save us as to the body and exalt our humbled body. Instead of an earthly body, we will receive a heavenly body.

When the Lord ascended into heaven, what was left of Him behind? Nothing—not even His clothing. It was the same body, yet it had been changed. The risen Christ left behind an empty grave, and in the next phase—what we call His ascension—He disappeared entirely from the earth. After His resurrection He manifested Himself to His disciples indeed in the same body, but it had been changed.

What we traditionally call His ascension was not His exaltation to the right hand of God. That had already taken place forty days earlier. In reality this ascension is His final sign on earth—the sign of His return. What the disciples saw then, the believing remnant of Israel will see in reverse order. On that occasion they will see the “Angel of the LORD” in glory—the Lord Jesus—as the shepherds once did in the field of Ephrath:

> “And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God.” (Luke 2:13)

In Revelation, the twenty-four elders do exactly the same around the throne. They continually depict the Church. Moreover, Hebrews 12 says that we are come “unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem… to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven… and to an innumerable company of angels.” (Hebrews 12:22–23) That is the Church.

The Lord will then appear with His ten thousands of angels, in line with what we read in Daniel—but those “angels” are us. That is why we go to meet Him. Whoever explains the Church away from the book of Revelation does not understand what the Church is. When the Kingdom is revealed, it is revealed by the Lord—but immediately thereafter also by His Body, the Church.

> Colossians 1:12–13
> 12 “Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:
> 13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:”

He has made us fit to be ministers of the New Testament (2 Corinthians 3), to have part in the inheritance. The inheritance is reward. To that end He has delivered us—and is still delivering us—from “this present evil world” (Galatians 1:4).

Christ is the King of the kingdom of heaven. Since all that is in heaven and on earth is subjected to Him, He is the King of the kingdom of God. We are to have an inheritance in that kingdom. We shall share in His glory and in His rule.

Therefore we read, on the one hand, that God has appointed a Man to judge the world, to be Judge of the living and the dead (Acts), yet in Corinthians it says that we shall judge the world and we shall judge angels. If the same is said about us as is said about the Lord Jesus, then we are evidently one Body with Him. Everywhere in the book of Revelation where “the Lamb” is mentioned, it refers to Christ—and everywhere Christ is mentioned, it at the same time concerns the Church. Precisely in the revelation of His Kingdom we are His Body—then more than ever, and officially in office. Now we are still in training; then we shall be in function. At that point it is scarcely mentioned separately any more.

We should realise that the transformation of our body is not merely recorded in Scripture as a prophetic fact. It is always connected with the reward we shall receive. In one way or another, our inheritance will express itself in the measure of glory we shall have bodily. And so our body will be changed in the future, at the rapture of the Church. That will be the visible reception of the prize. It will remain visible, for it is bound up with our body. It works, as it were, from the inside out: it begins with the spirit, proceeds with the soul, and ultimately expresses itself in the body.

Verse 21 is therefore a magnificent statement, for it speaks of the hope we have. Our whole life, our whole walk, should be based on that. That alone makes sense. Otherwise, all those things about suffering, humiliation and service would have no meaning at all, if they did not in some way lead to reward. That we expect every day, so that we may serve Him every day with that hope.

There is a direct connection between the rapture of the Church and our life, our service as Christians to our Lord now. Our service here ought to lead to our reward there. That is the most important link. It is bound up with the revelation of the glory of Christ and therefore also with the revelation of the glory of the Church. Our change, our transformation at the rapture of the Church, is in fact an anticipation of the final transformation of the whole old heaven and earth into a New Creation on the Last Day.

We are in Christ a new creature:

> “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Our position actually anticipates that New Creation. This is also evident from the fact that Scripture regards us as firstfruits of a New Creation, of a New Covenant, in the Kingdom—in short, as a church of firstborn ones. Our entire ecclesiastical position in heaven, in Christ, with a heavenly homeland and a heavenly inheritance, rests on this simple thought that we are firstfruits of a New Creation.

There is a difference, however: we as believers have a heavenly destiny, whereas, insofar as people are raised on the Last Day and are saved, their future lies on the new earth. The principle, though, is the same: it is the transformation of an old into a New Creation. This is what is also said in these last words of Philippians 3: “according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”

We as believers may live here on earth, but our citizenship is in heaven, and that also means that we shall be judged and rewarded—or suffer loss—according to heavenly standards. It is heavenly norms that God applies, even now, but it is expected of believers that they are joyful. Even under sorrowful circumstances. That is because we have hope (1 Thessalonians 4). We are indeed sorrowful—for example, when loved ones die—but not as others which have no hope. Our hope is always a source of joy.

The Gospel is a message concerning the future. The Word of God speaks by definition of the future. When in the Old Testament (Isaiah) the question is raised how we may know whether the word which has been spoken by a prophet is truly the word of the LORD and thus the Word of God, Scripture says: if it comes to pass, it was from God—otherwise not. God always declares the things to come beforehand. The Word He speaks always concerns what He Himself is doing: He tells what He is busy with, and what the end goal of it is. That is characteristic of the Word of God. If it did not speak of the future, it would, by definition, not be the Word of God. Besides, it would be of no use to us.

The strange thing is that modern theology assumes that prophecy is impossible. And if something has clearly come to pass, the explanation is that it was written after the event. In saying this one is actually saying that God does not exist. For if prophecy is impossible, then God does not speak, and if He does not speak, He does not exist.

God promises and fulfils His Word. Paul then writes to Timothy (elsewhere he writes to the Corinthians):

> “For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.” (2 Corinthians 1:20)

As far as we, on the one hand, live out of the fulfilment of the Old Testament promises, we have reason for joy. As far as we, on the other hand, live out of the better promises of the New Covenant that have been given to us, we have still more reason for joy.

Hence faith and hope are not in definition identical concepts, yet in practice they are. That is why they are so often mentioned in one breath. Faith is not the same as hope. Faith concerns the present; hope concerns the future. But in Scripture they are regarded as synonymous, for faith is faith in the work of God now—a work that will find its fulfilment in the future, and therefore it is hope. That is why there is joy in all circumstances.

What greater reason for joy could there be than knowing that we may one day see again those whom we have lost here? Joy, therefore, in all circumstances. That is why the apostle stresses it, and on this occasion he repeats it: “Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.” (Philippians 4:4)

Our whole position is anchored in that Lord. It does not say, “Rejoice in Jesus Christ,” but “Rejoice in the Lord.” This still means that He is our Lord and that we ought to serve Him. We should find our joy in our service to Him.

A person finds joy and peace—true happiness—only in his occupation: in what he does and with what he fills his life. Some believers are not joyful simply because they do not serve the Lord. That does not satisfy. Where people think they must live under the law, under the Old Covenant, there they are not serving the Lord. The old does not bring joy. It cannot satisfy, because it can never truly come from the heart.

We who live under the New Covenant can, from the heart—from a disposition formed by the Word of God—in all freedom and willingness, serve the Lord. That brings satisfaction.

Creatures of God can find fulfilment in life only when they serve God. We were not able to do that, and therefore man by nature is unhappy. But God has made us able—by new birth, by giving us a new heart, by writing or planting His Word in our hearts, that it might save our souls. We are to find our joy in that—in the Lord.

That does not mean that this service is always “pleasant” in itself. Some people do things they “enjoy,” and yet when they are engaged in them, it is not pleasant at all. What is attractive is the result. The activity itself may not be enjoyable, but the result gives fulfilment. So it is not about the momentary sense of joy—for that is not always present—but about the overall effect. It brings peace.

The New Covenant is not called “the covenant of peace” for nothing. One finds peace in one’s existence, in life, in service as such.

Joy and peace ought to be characteristic of a believer’s life. One must first have peace with God, be reconciled to Him. The Greek word for “peace” carries the thought of two parties being brought together. From that reconciliation come rest, peace and satisfaction. The strain and pressure

that accompany war and conflict have then disappeared. That is, of course, where it begins.
One of man's problems is not only that he is at odds with God, but also with himself. Usually this is because he cannot do what he would like to do —either because of circumstances or because of his own limitations. What he wants to do, he cannot do. Paul would say: "For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do." (Romans 7:19) Thus unrest and conflict always remain. That cannot be solved in the natural man. But in a child of God it is indeed completely resolved.
The point is that the will to do something is worked in us by God Himself (Philippians 2:13). Then there is peace and agreement between what one would like to do and what one actually does. The will of man—our will as believers—is changed. It is shaped by the indwelling Spirit, by the Word of God which we come to know and which is planted in our hearts. As we learn to know the Lord through the Word of God, our will is brought into submission to His will. And God then gives us the ability to put that will into practice. Where willing and doing are in harmony, there is true happiness.
Why was Gospel never translated as "good message" or "glad tidings"?
In the Old Testament, the Hebrew equivalent is translated as "good tidings" or "good message". In the New Testament, however, the Greek word euangelion was not translated; instead, they settled on the word Gospel. Sometimes I think they did not translate it because readers might then realise that it is, in fact, a joyful message. Now it is a term we do not use in everyday an they never really know what "Gospel" means.
More specifically, it is a joyful or good message for which people were waiting. A message which one knows must come. One is expecting something; something is going to happen; and when the announcement comes that it has happened, that is "Gospel". Hence a birth announcement is glad tidings, following on from expecting a child. It is the fulfilment of what was announced beforehand.
In this New Testament case, it is the message for which one had had to wait four thousand years. Scripture says that God "preached before the gospel unto Abraham":

> Galatians 3:8
> "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed."

In Romans 1:1 we read that it concerns a message which God had promised beforehand. It is a joyful message—namely of life, of justification and of resurrection. The glad tidings of Christ.
In that we find satisfaction. If you truly wish to serve the Lord, He will give you the opportunity, in one way or another. It is the only meaningful occupation for man—and, of course, also for the believer.
Philippians 4:4 is the heart of the Gospel. That the glad tidings are unto salvation is not only for eternity, but already for our life here and now. In general one may say that this epistle exhorts believers to be servants, and to walk accordingly, in imitation of the Lord Jesus Christ. As we serve here in this life, in this sinful world, we shall afterwards share in the reign

of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is held forth as our example in the very heart of this epistle.
In that connection the apostle says with strong emphasis:

Philippians 4:4
“Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.”
That is: Rejoice in the Lord, who is your Master and whom ye serve. Rejoice in your service at every opportunity. He repeats it, because this is exactly what it is about.

Philippians 4:5
“Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.”
We serve the Lord, and moderation carries the thought that one knows one’s place. To imposing due restraint, is to be aware of our boundaries. Ephesians 4 defines it:

> Ephesians 4:2–3
> “With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;
> Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

These are all, in fact, synonyms of the word moderation – calmness of mind, restraint, modesty. In this way one endeavours (applies oneself diligently) to keep the spiritual unity—unity which has been brought about by the Covenant of Peace (the bond of peace). That is the New Covenant. Where we do not bear with one another, there is war, there is strife. Unity of mind is preserved where one knows how to limit oneself, knows one’s own place, and thus where one is humble.
Why the sentence “The Lord is at hand” is placed with this verse, I do not know, but it is taken here as one whole. The word translated “moderation” is, from the Greek, difficult to render if you want to translate very literally. In the word lies the notion of separation or boundary. It has the meaning that one knows one’s place, knows one’s limits, and stays on this side of the dividing line. We ought to know our place, give others room, and adopt a very reserved attitude.
If we are conscious that the Lord is near, we shall undoubtedly behave more modestly than we normally do. If the Lord were visibly present with us, our conduct would look very different. We would be occupied with very different things.
The problem of the natural man is that he does not know his limits and therefore ever wants to go beyond, wants more and further. Such principles lead us straight to the essence of evil—the devil. They are directly connected with pride and self-exaltation. One must stand up for oneself, claim one’s rights, work on “self-realisation”. It is always about trying to push one’s own boundaries further. Humanly speaking there may be something in that; one person will advise you to be more assertive, another to slow down a bit. But for the believer it is different: our lives as children of God are in the hand of our Lord—the One whom we serve. If it is His will that we should “rise higher” in His service, He will see to that. We do not need to arrange that ourselves.

On the other hand, this moderation, as mentioned here, must be seen as a fruit of the Spirit. If we take the whole list from Galatians 5 together, we could just as well include moderation. Someone who lives in such a way does not really “fit” in a normal human society. People will probably say: such a person is of no use. You should not have people like that on a board or committee, because they won’t open their mouths. Yet I do think it is a good Christian attitude to life.
Where we might be less modest or reserved is perhaps in this: in always being ready to give an answer concerning the hope that is in us. If you are given the opportunity, you should certainly do so. You do not, however, always need to try to create opportunities under all circumstances. There are those who are naturally suited to that, also as children of God. I simply do not think that is the general rule for all the children of God.
We live in this world as strangers, in the manner of Abraham. We do not belong here. We are dead to the world; we are dead, and we ought to reckon the world—and therefore also ourselves—dead. We are strangers here; we have no continuing city here; we do not belong here. We have rights in our heavenly homeland, of which we are citizens. We are subject to different principles, different rights and duties. And therefore some moderation and calmness is needed here. We do not need to seek our interests as children of God in this world.
Restraint works best under all circumstances. I think this was, in general, the manner of life of the Lord Jesus Himself during His earthly walk. At times He did speak very sharply, in relation to unbelievers, but always only where they attacked the Word of God. That is the truth, the source of life, and when they touched that Word, He addressed His audience as “generation of vipers”, and so on. Otherwise, He was very reserved. He did not fight against the Jews, the Pharisees—let alone the Sadducees. They fought against Him, but He was very restrained in this. In the end, He said nothing at all. That is one of the most important examples He has given. When He had been arrested and stood before an earthly judge, He generally said nothing—except when He was asked a direct question concerning Biblical truth; then He answered. But if it was purely personal, concerning His own rights, He said absolutely nothing. We see the same later with Peter, Stephen and Paul. They too took a very reserved stance.

Philippians 4:6
“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”
People who are anxious tend to be somewhat less moderate. When people are burdened with great cares, they do the most extreme things. That is why these matters are placed together here: “Let your moderation be known unto all men” and “Be careful for nothing.” The Lord is near.
In this verse the deepest need of man is addressed. It touches on what is most characteristic of man: he is able to worry about the future, which he does not control. An animal does not do that; it lives in the moment. Perhaps we bring our concerns in prayer to the Lord, asking Him whether He might resolve this or that; but the intention is that we should have no anxious care at all. Yet we do worry. We think about tomorrow, make

plans, and see, already in advance, great problems. The thought is that the cares we have arise from our thinking. That we think is strongly commended in Scripture. We ought, for example, to use our minds to seek the truth and to seek the Lord. Man must think. He is made able to, and therefore must.
The consequence of that, however, is that we also have cares about where it all must lead. There is a saying: “A man suffers often most from the suffering that he fears, but which never comes to pass.” Paul says here: “Be careful for nothing.” We should certainly bear responsibilities, but with regard to future things, it says that we should not be anxious.
If such care arises automatically as we think things through, that is quite normal. But what should we do with it? We may let it “be made known unto God,” it says. A good remedy for anxiety is: “count your blessings.” If you have problems, consider what is not problematic. If you are lacking something, or if something is wrong, count your blessings.
Care leads to prayer and springs from human thinking or from the responsibility one bears. But those belong together and are actually inseparable. This verse certainly does not say that we should make ourselves anxious and then present our worries in detail to the Lord, for Him to fill in or “fix”. That is not what it says. It is worded carefully: “let your requests be made known unto God.” It is purely a spiritual matter.

Philippians 4:7
“And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”
With this the apostle is saying that the care mentioned in verse 6 is, in the first place, caused by the understanding mentioned in verse 7. That peace goes beyond all understanding—and therefore also beyond all care. Out of anxiety arise desires, longings—not merely material desires, but above all the longing that there may no longer be any cause for anxiety.
It begins with thinking, and then feelings arise; desire is one such feeling. To have care, to be anxious, ought to remain within bounds. It should not so dominate our emotions—our hearts and our minds—that we lose control. These are the two different aspects of the inward natural man: on the one hand the thinking faculty—reason, intelligence—and on the other hand the emotions.
The problem is that the understanding sometimes drives the emotions wild—and conversely as well, for it can work both ways. Here the natural order is followed, not the unhealthy one: first thinking, and from that the emotions arise; first knowing, and from that the inward disposition takes shape. Out of our thinking care and desire may then arise. That is not in itself a problem, until the emotion gains the upper hand and is no longer under control. That is what ought not to happen.
Hence we read in Scripture that one really does have care, or care for something. Paul himself, as he says, is overrun—he cannot help it—by the care of all the churches. Insofar as one does not have this under control, there is only one thing to be done: exactly what is written here—let it be made known unto the Lord. If at work you cannot cope with what lies on you, you must go to your boss; there is little else for it. If he does not want

to lose you, he will have to do something about it. That is precisely what the Lord really does. He cares for us. We are His staff, and we ought to be modest—not wanting to solve it ourselves, but bringing it to the Lord. That does nothing to remove our responsibility, which we ought to bear under all circumstances—but always within certain limits.

We find an example of this in Acts 6, where it is recognised that the apostles in Jerusalem are bearing such a great responsibility in the church that they no longer come to their actual ministry. There we have the account of the appointment of the deacons—that is, servants. Boundaries are drawn for the apostles, and beyond those others must take over. A person must know his limits, must know what he should and should not do. That has very much to do with moderation, knowing one's place. Being able to distinguish and knowing one's own responsibility.

One of the things that also plays an important role is this: if we have a particular responsibility, and have received particular gifts, that may also be in our secular work. In that as well we ought to serve the Lord. We should serve Him in all things, also in our personal lives. The Lord gives us a responsibility, usually for the rest of our lives. Just look at the Biblical examples. The priests, for instance—for the rest of their lives. Paul—for the rest of his life, of course. He had to be faithful to the ministry, and thus was a good and faithful servant.

There are simply things for which we cannot be responsible.

This "peace of God" is not only an emotion, but the whole state in which one lives. It "passeth all understanding." That means that, when we use our understanding, we would have every reason to be heavily burdened with care—and yet we still have peace. That is what the Lord, as the highest responsible One, the Head of the Body, grants us.

We live under the New Covenant, and that is the Covenant of Peace. Peace ought to be characteristic in the life of the believer. That is exactly what has been promised. It is characteristic of life in a New Creation, in the New Jerusalem, or within the Church. Where in practice this is not so, it is because people do not let their requests be made known unto God—and leave them there.

I am aware that some use remarks of this kind as an excuse not to have to bear responsibility. But that is not how it is. We ought to bear our responsibility; the Lord has given us a gift. What goes beyond that and lies outside our capacity, we ought, in the spirit of meekness, to leave it to the Lord. These are different principles from those that govern nature or human society. In the world, man regards himself as the crown of creation—or as the highest product of evolution. If anything is to be done, man must do it. For us as children of God, it is not so. We have a Head, and He will arrange the things. Him we are to serve.

That does not alter the fact that our service consists in bearing responsibility. Anyone who knows what his service is, and takes it seriously, knows what it is to be anxious—and ought also to know what it is to make that care known unto God. Such a person also knows that the peace of God keeps the hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

These statements do not, in general, refer to man's earthly life as such; they concern the believer's service to the Lord. It is in that context that

these things are described. When we limit these statements strictly to service for the Lord, we may indeed have cares—but we should first of all thank Him that we have such a service, and that we may be involved in the work of the Lord. That ought to be a source of joy to us.
Someone who truly has no cares at all does not know life. When the prayers and supplications are answered, and there is no longer any cause for care, there still remains thanksgiving; hence:

> 1 Thessalonians 5:18
> “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”

And it also says:

> 1 Thessalonians 5:17
> “Pray without ceasing.”

Prayer in Scripture, especially in the New Testament, is used in the broadest sense, as a designation for the whole practical service of a child of God to God. All of that together is called prayer, because prayer is the most characteristic mark of the Christian life. It is the expression of dependence upon the Master, the Lord. That is why this one term “praying” is used for the whole Christian life.
So when in 1 Timothy 2:8 it says that Paul “will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting,” this does not mean that they should, in every place, literally stand with raised hands praying. There “praying” stands for the entire practical service to God. The hands that are lifted up are to be filled by God (Leviticus). Those hands are holy because they have been given a particular function—set apart for the service of God.
The idea is that you do not ask just anyone. We are not beggars in the random sense. If you ask something of someone, you are assuming that that person is also able to grant the request. Where it concerns truly important matters of life—especially in connection with the children of God—when we ask something of the Lord, we are at the same time acknowledging and confessing that we deem Him able, on the basis of what He can do and has promised to do, to meet the need. It is the expression that we trust Him as the Giver of what we need.
“Hearts and minds” has to do with what in modern language we call the psyche—the control of our feelings. That becomes possible when our thoughts are brought under control. Our thinking is to be changed. We ought to think, but preferably from the standpoint of the truth, and thus from the Word of God. That is tremendously powerful, because then the basis of our thinking does not lie in our own ideas or human wisdom, but in the incorruptible Word of God. In this way the incorruptible Word of God, through our thinking, will keep our hearts and minds. It brings our lives under control—sufficiently, at any rate, for us to be able to serve the Lord within that. More is not needed.
The next verse continues in that line, and ends with: “think on these things.” It is not about worrying or vague meditation, but about deliberate reasoning. That is clear also from the Greek word that is used here: logizomai. That is the word for “to reckon, to calculate, to account”. “Think on these things” means that one knows what one is doing.

Philippians 4:8
“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”
These are the things we ought consciously to “enter in the ledger”, so to speak—to occupy ourselves with, to seek out. We should focus on them deliberately, orient ourselves towards them. That will almost certainly cost effort. We must make time for it. We must seek, and choose deliberately. If we do not, then everything that goes on in the world will, by itself, come over us. We will be confronted with it everywhere. We will run up against things that are not true, not honest, unjust, impure, not lovely, and certainly not “of good report.” They are not virtuous, and there is no praise in them. We simply acquire more problems. These things take hold of our thinking and our feelings.
What we must do is withdraw ourselves from them. If we cannot change them, we must walk away, withdraw ourselves, not participate. That has a positive effect on our thinking, our peace of mind, and our heart. And that, therefore, lies within our own responsibility. The intention has never been that a human being should simply be lived. Then he is a slave. The natural man is lived by sin, the religious man by the law—and both, ultimately, by death. But God’s intention is that man should truly live, that he should make his own choices, decide for himself with what he fills his life; therefore he must also choose to place his life at the disposal of his Lord. That has consequences for the rest of our life.
“Whatsoever things are true”—that is, whatever is according to the truth. “Whatsoever things are honest”—in the sense of whatever is honourable. “Whatsoever things are just”—in which is explicitly included living under the reign of grace, for that is entirely in harmony with the righteousness of God (Romans 3). “Whatsoever things are pure” and “lovely” speak for themselves. “Whatsoever things are of good report” also concerns the content of what is spoken.
We ought to seek these things. In Colossians 3 it says: “Seek those things which are above” and then: “Set your affection on things above.” That is the same here. These things we ought to seek, and we ourselves are responsible for that.
We can complain about all the untrue, dishonest, unjust, impure and unlovely things around us, but that is of no use. Our responsibility is to seek what is true, honourable, just and pure. Think on these things.

Philippians 4:9
“Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”
This ties in directly with verse 7. This time it is not said to Timothy—so that we might evade it by saying that he stood in the same office as the apostle Paul—but it is addressed to the Philippians in general and thus to believers in general.

The phrase “in me” applies to all four expressions, not only to “seen”. There are four words: learned, received, heard and seen. Learned and received may be regarded as entirely parallel. They refer to doctrinal matters, to doctrinal truth, to spiritual v. We learn them and, in learning, we receive them.

When heard and seen are then mentioned, it concerns sensory perception. That stands apart from doctrines or theories and refers to practical matters. Learning and receiving are doctrinal and concern the spirit; hearing and seeing are practical and concern the soul and thus our walk.

This is a further outworking of what the apostle already said in Philippians 3:17:

“Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.”

When one is a follower of Paul, one has the guarantee that the God of peace is with us. Where there is a great deal of unrest—even among believers—it arises from neglecting what this verse says.

People do not allow themselves to be taught by Paul. They are not willing to receive from him. They do not listen to him and do not see him. Paul is, generally speaking, not a popular figure in Christendom—certainly not since the rise of the Roman Catholic Church. Since Peter has been placed on a pedestal, people have not cared much for Paul. The same is true nowadays in Protestantism. Paul is always the one to be blamed. People think they still understand something of the other apostles, but of Paul no longer. If that is the case, they actually understand nothing of the others either.

If you wish to honour Peter, you should also listen to what he says—namely when he points to the epistles of Paul. It is wisdom, he says, which is hard to be understood, which is also twisted—so that people understand nothing of it. That is what happens in practice.

There are so many Biblical subjects of which I think they are so clear and so frequently affirmed, especially by Paul, that I find it astonishing how little grasp people often seem to have of them in practice. The theme of law and grace, for example, you find in virtually all the epistles, also with the other apostles, and even in the Gospels, in the words of the Lord Jesus Himself—and still people do not understand it. The one from whom they find it hardest to escape is Paul; so he must suffer for it.

Nevertheless, we do not read that Peter calls upon us to be his followers; but we do read that Paul writes this, many times, and not only here. In this way the boundaries are marked within which we ought to live. It is a summary of the chapter, of the epistle, and indeed of Church truth as a whole.

> 2 Timothy 3:10–11
> 10 “But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience,
> 11 Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me.”

The apostle writes this not to all believers, but to one man, who also had desired—and held—the office of overseer. That does not alter the fact that

through Timothy it is indeed for all believers. Especially overseers and elders are expected to be examples to the flock. To Timothy, therefore, the apostle writes this more extensively and with greater emphasis.

> 2 Timothy 3:12–14
> 12 “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.
> 13 But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.
> 14 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them;”

The “but” at the beginning of verse 14 relates back to verses 12 and 13, where it is stated that evil men and seducers shall go on from bad to worse, thus departing from these things. Children of God are meant here; Timothy is warned about them.

Verse 14 is often quoted only in part: “Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned.” The conclusion then is: there is nothing more to seek; everything has already been learned; nothing else, nothing new may be learned. But that is only half a quotation if used that way. The point is that Timothy knows from whom he has learned these things, and especially also of what he has been assured. The idea is that Paul did indeed teach Timothy many things, but that the assurance means that it is drawn from the Scriptures—and thus from the Old Testament.

We find this with Paul in all his letters. He never just says something. When he explains something, it is always supported from Scripture. It is not “Paul only.” Strictly speaking, that applies to everything in the New Testament. It is always based on what had already been set down in the Old Testament. It is about the fulfilment of God’s promises, about the working out of God’s plan. Both the promises and the plan we find in the Old Testament.

The first words of the Lord Jesus were also: “It is written…”—with great emphasis. And so it remained during His ministry; later, with the apostles and disciples, it was exactly the same. For us now it is least important from whom we have learned something, as long as we have assurance of it—as long as we know that it comes from the Scriptures.

Paul does, however, stand in a very special position, because he himself is announced in the Old Testament. It does not stand out readily, but it is so. In quite a number of Old Testament symbols—especially in the historical accounts—we can recognise the figure of Paul. For example, in the “fit man” who had to lead the goat out into the wilderness on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16). Who leads the animal outside the camp? If you ask me, that is Paul.

He himself says in Acts 13, in Antioch: “It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.” He quotes Isaiah 49:6, where we read:

“I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.”

When we read that in Isaiah 49, we say: that concerns the Lord Jesus Christ. Of course. But Paul applies it to himself. He must do so, being led by the Spirit. One can also say that it is Paul who actually brings that light to the ends of the earth—to the Gentiles. That is, indeed, what he literally did.
The upshot is that even the figure of Paul himself is announced beforehand. He was to fulfil a particular function in salvation history, and more specifically in establishing the circumstances of our present dispensation. He identifies himself with the Lord Jesus Christ. After that, to a considerable degree, the distinction between the Lord and Paul fades—though in another sense, of course, not at all. We are not saved by Paul. But where it concerns practical matters, he is identified with Christ. Therefore he says: “Be ye followers of me.” Only once does he add: “even as I also am of Christ.” For the rest, he sets himself forth as an example. That already happened earlier in Philippians: first the example of the Lord Jesus in chapter 2, and then in chapter 3 the example of Paul himself.
It is therefore not at all strange that statements we readily apply to the Lord Jesus can also be applied to the apostle Paul. That is quite legitimate and in harmony with the special nature of the prophetic Word. Moreover, if we take that statement from Isaiah literally, we might ask whether the Lord, after His resurrection, was actually at the ends of the earth. I am inclined to say: no, not literally. If we ask the same regarding Paul, Scripture says nothing explicit; yet there are very good reasons to believe that he was—quite literally—in Britain.
Of Christ it is written that He is the Light. That is the supreme and foundational sense. But in practice these things are applied to Paul. His historical function we find in the Old Testament—both in the symbolism and in prophecy. He therefore sets himself forth as an example.

> 2 Timothy 3:15–17
> 15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.
> 16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:
> 17 That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.

Verse 15: Nevertheless he clearly learned quite a lot more later on, especially in practical matters. The “throughly furnishing” of verse 17 is indeed done in the first place by the Scriptures, and then further through the examples we have in Paul—and above all, of course, in the Lord Jesus Himself.

Philippians 4:9
Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.
Here God is called “the God of peace” because the thought is not only that God should be with us. Elsewhere He is called “the God of all comfort” or “the Father of glory”. In such expressions, the focus is first, of course, on God Himself and the blessings He gives—but thereafter very

much on those blessings: peace and rest in our lives. The inner conflict of the natural man should no longer be there. It disappears only when we are engaged in another conflict, namely as soldiers of Christ. Even in that conflict one may nevertheless have peace, paradoxical as that sounds.
If one seeks peace, that can only be where one makes one's cares and requests known unto God, and where one is faithful to the things taught us in Scripture. Outside that, it is of no use. There is only one way to come to peace and rest in life. That does not mean there will never again be difficulties. That is no problem; one must have some of that, otherwise one is not really living. But they do not need to rob us of rest and peace.
If you are seeking that peace, it is only found by walking the way set before us by the Lord and the apostles: the way of faithfulness to Scripture, to what has been taught, and of taking as examples the lives of Paul and the Lord Jesus and all those who are set before us in the Bible as examples. And there are quite a number of them.
There are conditions attached. Not as demands laid upon us by God—for He grants us the opportunity—but we should believe in the practice of life, be faithful to and trust the Lord, and run the course He sets before us, which leads to this state. With that state, and with that peace, we can live. Peace is for each of us, if we know that bond with the Lord and thus live according to the chief ruling principle of the New Covenant: to live out of the riches of the grace of God. In that grace we have received forgiveness, we forgive one another, and God also gives us something to do. He fills our hands and gives us an occupation in which we may serve Him, to which we are to be faithful, and in which already now we find our peace and joy—while we then set our expectation upon our Saviour, who shall change our humbled bodies. From Him we receive glory, because He has promised it.

Philippians 4:10–23 forms the conclusion of this epistle. In these last words the apostle Paul explains that we, as believers, are to be the object of the Lord's work—a work He began in us in the past, when we came to faith, and which He will perform until the day of Jesus Christ. Thus it is written in the opening of the epistle, in chapter 1:6.
The thought behind this is that, where God does and completes a good work upon us, we as children of God should submit ourselves to that work. We should also be conscious of it. In that connection the apostle speaks of suffering, humility and service, as is fitting for every believer. In particular, he gave the example of the Lord Jesus Himself, especially in chapter 2, who "humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." After that came exaltation—and that applies not only to the Lord Jesus Himself as the First, but to each one of us.
We are called to share in the glory of Christ and are conscious that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us," on the basis of the promises of God. Of these things the apostle also speaks here in this last part of the epistle to the Philippians, in the chapter headed "Exhortations." They are all exhortations that directly concern the service of believers as such. They also directly concern what is elsewhere called temperance or self-control.

That is one of the features of Christian virtues. One must know one's limitations.
We are to live "soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world," as the apostle says in Titus 2. He uses that word in many other places as well: temperance, humility, service, with all the consequences that brings. Under all circumstances of life we ought to learn—above all, to learn to know the Lord. Life is one great school, and its goal is not found here, not in the mortal and corruptible (1 Corinthians 15), but in the incorruptible, immortal and undefilable. We ought to be conscious of that.
All this falls within the scope of Paul's statement that "all things work together for good to them that love God." (Romans 8:28) To love Him is, in practice, to love Him in action—and that corresponds to serving. To love the Lord is to serve the Lord.
The benefit of studying the Bible verse by verse is that it becomes impossible to evade anything—also not this passage. It is directly connected with the simple thought at the beginning of the Biblical exposition on the Christian life:

> Romans 12:1
> "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

To "present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God" means, in practice, nothing if it is applied only to our physical body in the abstract. It also concerns everything we "possess". Only when the body does something—is active—does it mean anything. The body can only be active if it has time at its disposal. If we present our bodies, we also present our time. We belong, with body and soul, to the Lord.
Some people speak of giving tithes—whether that is required or not, whether it still applies to us under the New Covenant. For us the rule is that we give a hundred percent—everything! We read that we are to present our bodies (our members) as "instruments of righteousness" (Romans 6) or as a sacrifice acceptable to God (Romans 12). The outworking of that is that we are wholly His property.
In classic evangelical language, this was once called "giving our lives to the Lord" or "coming to surrender". We have become servants of God. Man ought to know God, to seek Him, to feel after Him, to find Him, and to thank Him and give Him glory—that is, to serve Him. Yet there is "none that doeth good, no, not one… they are together become unprofitable." (Romans 3:12) By nature we are not useful to serve Him and to give Him glory.
Man in general is not unto the glory of God. But he can be made so, and that is the purpose of the whole plan of redemption. That is why we are born again.
We ought to be:

> Colossians 1:12–13
> 12 "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light:
> 13 Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son:"

Where we share in that Kingdom, we should serve that King. We have been made meet for this, verse 12 says.

> 2 Corinthians 3:6
> "Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."

The Old Covenant of the law was graven in stones and laid upon the flesh—that is, upon the old creation. But we have become new creatures in Christ and live in that New Creation, under a New Covenant. In that setting we are now able to serve God.

Our lives, as children of God in general, ought to be unto the glory of God. The Church as a whole ought likewise to be unto the glory of God. We are to share in that glory, and we have been made able to do so. Now that we are children of God, we are able to give a hundred percent. That was always the intention. Under the law and in the old creation it was impossible because of the dominion of sin. But now that we have been placed under the dominion of grace and of righteousness, we are able to serve God. We are not to do so with ten percent, but with one hundred percent.

In the epistle to the Hebrews it is explained that we, as children of God, are to serve God. We should present ourselves to Him who sits upon the throne of grace and make ourselves available for the practical service of God—or of Christ—under the New Covenant of grace. At the end of that epistle it is stated that, as we share in New Testament worship, we have been made priests. Service to God is by definition priestly service. We are a people of priests and kings, made a royal priesthood. As priests, we must also have something to offer.

In Hebrews it is written of the Lord Jesus that, as High Priest, He must have something to offer—namely Himself (Hebrews 8:3). He Himself, with His entire eternal life, is placed in the service of God under the New Covenant—after His resurrection.

In Romans 6 we read that Christ is "raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father," and it is the intention that we, being planted together with Him, should walk "in newness of life" and unto the glory of God. That means that we offer ourselves as sacrifices.

For that purpose we go forth unto Him without the camp. As far as the world is concerned, the Lord Jesus Christ stands outside the camp. He was cast out of the camp by the camp and put to death. Strictly speaking, as far as the world is concerned, He still is. Therefore we read:

> Hebrews 13:13–15
> 13 "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.
> 14 For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.
> 15 By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name."

We are to go outside the camp to serve Him. A city in Scripture is always a kingdom—and we do not have that here. We are priests and therefore must offer something. This is not only about a prayer, but about "the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name," even when we are not praying.

Continually. We should always speak the Word of God and bear witness to the truth and the hope that is in us. That can be in prayer and in the songs we sing.
After that the subject is broadened further:

> Romans 3:10–14
> 10 “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:
> 11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.
> 12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.
> 13 Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips:
> 14 Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness:”

Here the throat, the tongue, the lips and the mouth are mentioned. All four concern the word a person speaks—what he says and teaches. That unconsciously reveals what is in his heart. Perhaps not intentionally, but it does—and the result is far from good.
If there is one bodily member by which a person expresses what is in him, it is his tongue. That is evident from Romans 3, where these expressions are listed one after another. Only then do hands and feet follow—their walk and their way—but in the first place their tongue. We find the same in James 3, with the heading “The misuse of the tongue.” The Biblical thought is: if a person uses any member, it is his tongue. Even if he can do nothing else, speaking is the last thing he can still do.
It is especially the mouth that expresses what lives in a person. If we have been changed, born again, placed in the light—in short, if our hearts are filled with the Word of Christ, which dwells richly in us (Colossians 3:16), the first bodily member that comes into consideration to express that is the tongue, the mouth, the throat, the lips—the word we speak. Simply what we say in daily life. That reveals what is truly in our hearts.
Hence we also find such statements here. In Ephesians and Colossians it says that, if the Word of Christ dwells richly in us, we should speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with grace in our hearts. It comes out first through the mouth. Hebrews 13:15 says the same about the “fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name.” That costs us the least. It is not material; it is highly spiritual. It is unseen.

> Hebrews 13:16
> “But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”

Everything we give to the Lord is called a sacrifice. Romans 12: that we should present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God. Then we should be transformed by the renewing of our mind, to prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.
On the one hand it concerns spiritual things—the Word which we have received freely and can therefore freely pass on. On the other hand we find “to communicate” (sharing), which in practice often comes down to the collection. Not necessarily, for sharing can also play a role among believers mutually and should do so at times. Such things are somewhat dependent on the society in which we live; it largely determines whether

this is necessary or not. But it does not change the fact that doing good and sharing are Christian virtues. It begins with sharing.
The most practical sacrifice is that of doing good and sharing. That is why we find it described at length in many epistles. The apostle says about it in:

Philippians 4:10
“But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.”
They had become active and had contributed—presumably financially—to the apostle Paul, who in part depended on the gifts of other believers. Apparently Epaphroditus had brought certain things on behalf of the Philippians, as we read in verse 18. Paul immediately describes these as a sacrifice—“an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.”
It is remarkable that the apostle does not say that he lacked it or that he badly needed it. On the contrary. We never really learn anything about Paul’s material condition—how he fared in that respect. We only know that sometimes he received gifts, but also that at times he provided his own livelihood by manual labour, making tents. In his epistles he certainly gives thanks for the gifts received, but we never read that he asks for them. If we think we find him asking, it turns out not to be for himself, but for a collection on the mission field for the benefit of the mother church in Jerusalem. Those chapters in 2 Corinthians deal with that.
Money was collected in the Gentile world for the impoverished believers in Jerusalem. That did not need to continue long, because within a short time Jerusalem, and thus the whole church in Jerusalem and the entire “camp”, would cease to exist.
The main background of the collection on the mission field for the mother church in Jerusalem is that the believers there had become dependent on the believers among the Gentiles. Thus Jewish believers had become subordinate to the believers from the nations. Where we might expect—and indeed read to some extent—that the original Gospel went from Jerusalem to the Gentiles, we ultimately read that the whole situation was reversed: the Gospel is brought by Gentiles back to Jerusalem, or, in other words, to the Jews.
With regard to these material things, it was exactly the same. It is the reversal of the usual order. And that is precisely what happened in the history of the apostle: a complete reversal of things, where salvation no longer went from the Jews to the Gentiles, but was preached from the Gentiles to the Jews. The eventual destruction of Jerusalem is the logical outcome of that.
The believers in Jerusalem sold all their property, and the proceeds were laid at the apostles’ feet. Everyone knows that, economically, this is not wise—not because they gave things away, but because they were then left without any possessions. Viewed humanly, they acted quite unwisely. That such a church became poor is thus very understandable

economically. I think, however, that there is a much deeper background. This also appears from Paul's ministry.
He later says that he came to bring alms to his nation in Jerusalem (Acts 24:17), and thereby, in particular, to demonstrate his love for the Jews. Paul had always been that strange "Roman" who did not seem to care much for Jewish tradition—but in the end he showed that things were not so. He went up to Jerusalem precisely in order to accommodate them. But immediately a riot broke out, and he had to be rescued by the Romans. It did not "work".
What matters, in this connection, is that among believers there is mutual sharing. Where there is lack in one place, it ought, in some way, to be supplied from another. That is a Christian virtue, for the simple reason that in Old Testament times the Lord was already called "Jehovah-jireh"—"The LORD will provide." We share that responsibility: to provide in need and/or to see to the support of those who labour in the Word.
The apostle says he rejoiced greatly. In the Greek, the word "to remember" here is the same as "to be minded" in Philippians 2:2 and 5, where it says that we should be "likeminded" and of the same mind. It is connected with thinking, but goes deeper: it concerns the inward disposition. When verse 10 says that they had "care" for him, it means that they were devoted to Paul and knew themselves to be involved with him. That is also the mind of Christ, who is likewise involved with us, who knows what we need, who is a loving God and Lord and provides for any lack because of the bond that exists.
That same mind—that same disposition of service—Paul recognises here in the Philippians. That is what makes him rejoice—not because it happened to suit him so well, but simply because he saw that the Philippians had the right disposition.

Philippians 4:11
Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.
Did the apostle, at that moment, actually lack anything or not? We shall never know.
A person's happiness and well-being do not lie in what he possesses. One finds one's happiness, satisfaction, peace first in what one is; then in what one does; and only lastly in what one has. Our possessions enable us to do certain things, and that in turn has an influence on what we are—but the real issue is who we are. That is also what the apostle is saying here. Elsewhere he certainly does say that we should be content with the present—with what we have. But here he says he is content with what he is, namely: a servant of Jesus Christ. We too ought to be that in practice; then we shall find our joy in that, and everything else will count for far less.
Whether we then have lack or abundance does not matter so much. It does make a difference, of course, but it is not decisive.
Some people think it is all about what they possess. They may be painfully aware that they themselves are "nothing", and that must then be compensated by possessions. Then, outwardly, it may look like something

—provided, of course, that it is displayed; otherwise it still does not “work”. But the point is that a person is something; and as soon as one truly is something, possessions no longer play such a role.
We, as children of God, are something. We have been made something by God Himself, through new birth. Therefore possessions no longer have such weight. The question is what we have become in Christ. We have become children of God, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, and we are waiting for our future inheritance. That is what has been promised to us.

Philippians 4:12
I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.
To have lack may be regarded as being abased; to have abundance may be regarded as being exalted. Paul had experienced both. He does not say merely that he went through both situations, but that he has been instructed in both. A person must learn both—to go short and be abased, and to have abundance and be exalted.
There is a proverb: “It takes strong legs to carry prosperity.” But the legs must also be strong enough to carry poverty. Both extremes are not good; the real issue is temperance—moderation—both at the bottom and at the top. We are to learn that.

Philippians 4:13
I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.
This applies at all times, whatever the outward circumstances of life. Verse 12 at once sets the context and limitation of verse 13. The apostle is not saying that he can perform all kinds of feats that are impossible for an ordinary person. He is speaking about all the things he just mentioned in verse 12. He is able to go through all those circumstances; he knows how to deal with them. That is what one must at times learn: both poverty and abundance.
He therefore leaves the Philippians somewhat uncertain as to whether that gift was actually urgently needed or not.

Philippians 4:14
Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction.
From verse 11 you might conclude that he perhaps had lack; from this verse you might conclude that he did not. Affliction he certainly had, because he was imprisoned.
In the end, their action is an expression of the mind and disposition of these Philippians. Insofar as Paul rejoiced greatly, it was not because his balance went up, but because he discerned that the Philippians were sharing with him and therefore with his ministry, and were thus involved in the work of the Lord. His ministry was being valued. It was not about his immediate need, but about the expression of what the Word had produced in the Philippians.

Philippians 4:15–16
Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.
16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.
Philippi lay in Macedonia. It is rather tragic, but only from the Philippians did he receive material support. When he was in Thessalonica, he received financial help twice from the church that had just been founded and from which he had just come—Philippi. From Thessalonica itself he received nothing; nor, as we read elsewhere, from Corinth.
The Corinthians were particularly carnal, so one could not expect much in this respect. As for the Thessalonians, Acts already speaks negatively about them. Paul was only briefly in Thessalonica and then went on to Berea. Of the Bereans it is written that they were the good ones, but not of the Thessalonians. The Bereans “searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11); the Thessalonians, evidently, did not.

Philippians 4:17
Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.
He is not busy with fundraising; he regards this contribution as fruit. And he does not say that this fruit abounds to his account, but to theirs.
If all believers would realise that whatever they offer to the Lord here will be rewarded up there, things would look very different. If we truly realised that the Lord is always with us and in us, and hears every word we speak, we would certainly be more careful with our words.
If all who are supposed to preach the Word would be conscious that it is not their word and not their book from which they speak, but the Word of God, they would be much more cautious in drawing premature conclusions. If we really believed what Scripture says about all this, things would look very different.
Paul does not worry about whether he will have sufficient income. The Lord looks after him. When income does come, he says: that is good—for the givers, because it is put down to their account. That is the consequence of our position as Christians and in full harmony with the teaching of this epistle: to be servants here, and on “the day of Jesus Christ” to be rewarded by the Lord—when, through that service, the good work that God is doing in us will have been brought to completion.
We should do everything we do—as whatever it may be—as unto God. That also applies to the collection.
As a speaker or elder one seldom, if ever, sees the result of one’s work. That can bring considerable uncertainty. What the apostle is saying here is that the simplest “measuring instrument” is the collection. It is not about the money as such, but anyone who does a work expects to see some kind of result—if only to know whether he is doing it well or not. A message may be good, yet not come across at all. In many cases the message is actually not good at all, and yet people will gladly pay money for it. In other words: the uncertainty always remains.

Where people are not willing to contribute—also in the practical sense—nothing much will come of serving the Lord either. If it must not cost money, it must not cost time either. I think that is the background of the apostle's statements here. He does not seek the gifts, but the fruit of the Word—and that fruit sometimes expresses itself in money.
Our real destiny is not here; it is yet to come. Later, with the Lord, we shall have time in abundance; and insofar as there must be possessions, we shall be fabulously rich. When we are one day placed as sons, we shall have time and opportunities in abundance. That is what we look forward to.

Philippians 4:18
But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.
Whether his abundance came through that gift, he does not say. Although we might consider it "earthly mammon", he describes it as "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God."
In the Old Testament there are two kinds of Levitical offerings: those that are called "sweet savour" offerings, and others of which that is not said. The latter were the necessary offerings. The sweet savour offerings are the voluntary ones. Trespass- and sin-offerings are obligatory, and therefore nothing more is said about them in that sense. The peace- or thank-offering, the meat-offering and the burnt-offering are voluntary offerings. These are described in Leviticus as "sweet savour" offerings—"a sweet savour unto the LORD".
So when we read here "a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God," this is being compared with the sweet savour offerings of Leviticus. Likewise the phrase "an odour of a sweet smell" points us there. The other offerings are not so described; they are simply required. The first expression already says it: "an odour of a sweet smell." Paul therefore compares this gift with the voluntary offerings, and he even does so three times.
What is striking is that the sin- and trespass-offerings—which were not regarded as "sweet savour" offerings, at least not Godward—were compulsory, and have to do with the putting away of our guilt, the forgiveness of sins. They are necessary for the blotting out of the sins of the old man, so to speak. They portray the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus, by which the old is removed.
The other three offerings that follow are not prescribed as obligatory but are held forth as voluntary: if a man would bring such an offering, the Lord tells him how it must be done. These are therefore called voluntary offerings, and thus the sweet savour offerings. Precisely because they are not demanded of us by God, they are the result and expression of new life that is, in practice, devoted to the service of God. The idea in all three is that they express a life consecrated to God's service. That is not compulsory, but voluntary.
These sweet savour offerings are a picture of the life of Christ—His resurrection life now—"unto the glory of the Father" and "in newness of life" (Romans 6:4).

Ephesians 5:1–2
1 Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;
2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

This is not a description of the suffering and death of the Lord Jesus for the world, but of His service to us now, since His resurrection. That is why it says: “to God for a sweetsmelling savour.” That does not correspond to the sin- or trespass-offering in Leviticus, but to the peace-, meat- and burnt-offering.

Here we find both aspects together: on the one hand, the application of these offerings to the Lord Jesus Himself since His resurrection; on the other hand, their application to us as believers. We are to be followers of Christ. We share in His blessings, but the way there goes by the same route—through service. Therefore it says: walk in love, and be followers of God, or followers of Christ.

These sweet savour offerings are always voluntary offerings. They are not commanded as law, yet they ought to be the normal consequence of the fact that our sins have been taken away and we have become children of God. We are born again and thus saved; but the intention is that, on that basis, we voluntarily present our bodies as a “living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God”—a sweet savour offering (Romans 12).

Paul regards this gift—at the lowest level there is, that of earthly, material, perishable things—nevertheless as “an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.”

Philippians 4:19

But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

God supplies Paul’s need according to His riches—here, using the Philippians as the channel. But the reverse will also take place. That is simply the Biblical rule. The Lord whom we serve is the One who cares for those who serve Him. Of everything you give to the Lord you certainly do not become poorer. You become richer; and the best is yet to come.

We shall taste and behold our great riches in the future. I do not mean to take away anything from the riches we already possess here on earth. Paul writes to Timothy that if we possess something here on earth—or are something here—that gives us the opportunity to invest it in the future. We can place what we have—our riches, however limited they may be in this present age—into the coming age. That is the best investment there is. We do not have much here, but we place it at His disposal, and we shall receive it again with interest in the Day of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 4:20

Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

“Father” in fact means: the One from whom we receive everything. That is the true meaning of “Father”—not merely in the sense of “God the Father” in contrast to “God the Son”, but God as the One from whom we have

received life, who has, as it were, begotten us. He is the One from whose hand we live. Our heavenly Father knows what things we have need of. To that Father be glory for ever and ever. To this we as children of God are called—to this we are called as human beings in general: namely to give glory to God and to glorify Him in our lives. We should thank God and glorify Him. For that we are called and made able. Hence also the emphatic “Amen” at the end: so be it. The primary issue is not our glory, but His.

Philippians 4:21
Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you.
This shows the mutual bond between believers. There are no denominational walls here and no institutions overseeing everything. They are simply believers, all children of God, equal in that position.

Philippians 4:22
All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar’s household.
Believers were to be found at every level of society—even within the imperial household.

Philippians 4:23
The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.
Grace does not refer only to the forgiveness of sins. It is certainly an undeserved favour—but in the Biblical sense, especially for us as children of God, the greatest favour we receive is that we may and can serve Him. He gives us a “job”; we receive a calling. We get that freely. A race which we are to run, to give meaning and content to our lives—of course to the glory of God, but certainly also unto our own glory.
Hence this grace—by which not only our sins are forgiven and we have become children of God, but by which we are also allowed, as children of God, to serve Him, so that we may then receive from Him glory and reward. That grace is to be with us—not only the grace we receive, but also the grace we show.
If we are children of God, followers of God and followers of Christ, that means we also bestow undeserved favour upon one another. This ties in not only with the collection in the preceding passage, but with our whole position and service as children of God. Not only that we show grace to one another and thus forgive one another, but that we are also generous—communicative, sharing.
We should provide for that which is needed, wherever we can and wherever it lies on our path.
We live from what the Lord gives us; we have done nothing for it, we do not deserve it. And we should likewise give to others what they, in our eyes, perhaps do not deserve either. Whether they deserve it or not is not the point and is not our concern.
As children of God living by grace, we certainly have a responsibility toward one another—not only in spiritual things, but even in material

things. It concerns our whole life. That grace is to be with us. It is the grace of the New Covenant.

People have long lived under the Old Covenant, under the law, which dealt with every aspect of practical life. But we have been delivered from that and live under the dominion of grace, which likewise concerns every aspect of our life. All our doing and thinking—it is all grace. It lifts a burden off our shoulders, makes us free—and therefore also free toward one another. We live out of that grace.

What Scripture teaches us is that, as we receive grace, we should also give grace. And as we show grace to others, we shall from God’s side also receive grace. Our ministry, for which we have been made able, is a ministry of grace, a ministry of the New Covenant. What we have received freely, we are to pass on in the same way—freely—without expecting anything in return. That is the basic principle.

In practice it is not only fully livable, but even very simple. It greatly simplifies life. We are redeemed sinners, living from what the Lord gives us—and, where it is so, from what we give to one another or receive from one another.